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THE 2014 MD READERS POLL

page 21

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+ VICTOR INDRIZZO HIT AFTER HIT
+ KAREN CARPENTER DRUMMER TO THE CORE
+ DANNY CAREY DOES VOLTO!
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CONTENTS

Volume 37,
Number 12

On the Cover

Cover and contents photos by Alex Solca

44 GEORGE "SPANKY" McCURDY

"I'm always aware of what the fans need and what the artist is trying to do. If I'm coming in, it's time to go higher, time to upgrade." Lady Gaga's drummer doesn't mince words—but why be shy when you've so clearly got the goods? by Ken Micallef

12 Update

Volto!'s **Danny Carey** • Sveti's **Marko Djordjevic**

21 2014 *MD* Readers Poll

It's the only drummer poll that counts—own it.

32 Shop Talk

Year-End Maintenance by Kevin Schuenemann
A step-by-step guide to returning rusted, road-worn drums back to new.

34 Get the Best by Ilya Stemkovsky

Featuring the Police, Blondie, and Missing Persons

36 Rich Redmond on Stewart Copeland by Ilya Stemkovsky

The Police drummer has had an influence on an enormous variety of players. Jason Aldean's slammer reveals a country connection.

38 Portraits **Tammy Glover** by Ken Micallef

The Sparks/Thorcraft Cobra drummer turns the old line "Don't give up your day job" on its ear, balancing a corporate career with life in the fast lane.

60 Victor Indrizzo by Lowell Parker

Major producers value his studio-guy head and band-guy heart. And that rare combo has helped Willie Nelson, Avril Lavigne, Rob Thomas, Shakira, Colbie Caillat, and scores of others make some of their best music.

78 First Person

"You're really good…for a girl." Oh, the number of times a female drummer has suffered in silence—or not so quietly—through that kind of comment. DW's Juels Thomas thinks it's time we challenged ourselves to get past simpleminded gender thinking.

80 Up & Coming

Juan "Carlito" Mendoza by Anthony "Tiny" Biuso
The second time's the charm for the 2012 Drum-Off winner.

90 What Do You Know About...?

Karen Carpenter by Dena Tauriello
Maybe you were aware that the iconic soft-rock singer was also a drummer. But did you know just how *good* she was?

WIN Will Calhoun's drumset, valued at **$5,900**

pg 91

EDUCATION

68 Strictly Technique

Chops Builders Hemiolas, Part 3 by Bill Bachman

70 In the Pocket

Funk Drumming Training Camp
Part 6: Changing Subdivisions by Mike Adamo

72 Rock 'n' Jazz Clinic

Bembe-Inspired Half-Time Shuffles
10 Ways to Add an Afro-Cuban Inflection by Andy Shoniker

74 Rock Perspectives

Double Bass Workout
Part 5: Paradiddle-Based Hand Patterns by Todd Vinciguerra

76 Jazz Drummer's Workshop

***Stick Control* Revisited** Part 3: 5/4 Variations by Steve Fidyk

EQUIPMENT

22 Product Close-Up

- **Gretsch** Renown RN1 Drumset
- **DW** Collector's Series Concrete and Thin Aluminum Snares
- **Gaai** Charcoal Walnut Drumset
- **Remo** White Suede Emperor Drumheads
- **Snareweight** Magnetic Brass Dampener
- **Billdidit** Coady Cymbal Topper and xChanger

28 Electronic Review

Roland BT-1 Bar Trigger Pad

30 Gearing Up Animals as Leaders' **Matt Garstka**

82 New and Notable

DEPARTMENTS

8 An Editor's Overview

For Every Digital, an Analog by Adam Budofsky

10 Readers' Platform

16 Ask a Pro Simon Phillips, Tony Williams

18 It's Questionable

Technology Corner: Homemade Room Treatments

86 Showcase Featuring Drum Market

98 Critique

100 Inside Methods Swiss Chris

102 In Memoriam Alan Myers by Josh Freese

104 Kit of the Month Makes Your Heads Spin

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For Every Digital, an Analog

Jim Esposito

It's 2013, and the digital conversion of planet earth is nearly complete. Or is it?

It's easy to think that, as a species, we're on an unstoppable train headed for a not-too-distant future of computerized…well…everything. The power and speed of digitization has affected every aspect of our lives, from education to communication to transportation to entertainment. Many people would have you believe it hasn't just affected Life as We Know It, it's unequivocally *improved* it.

It hasn't. Has it made it bigger-faster-louder-brighter-smaller-sleeker? Absolutely. Are all those things desirable under all circumstances? Absolutely not.

Don't get me wrong; I love my Zoom, my iPod, my Octapad, my MacBook, my GPS. And my affection for Spotify, TiVo, and Wii Galaga is probably bordering on unhealthy.

But for every new gadget, app, and website I find myself obsessed with, there's something else that's unwieldy, inexact, or to one degree or another unpredictable that I wouldn't in a thousand years want to be without. My wood-shell snare drum with the noisy throw-off, which I've used with pretty much every band I've ever been in. My Teac ¼" reel-to-reel machine. (Ditto.) My Carmine Appice Shade cymbal. My collection of 1970s *Mad* magazines. My *Quadrophenia* LP that I got when I was ten, spilled hot chocolate all over when I was twelve, and wore out when I was fourteen. My friends. My family. My memories.

It's easy to get so sucked in by the new that we forget the old, but this is to our peril. One of the most lasting lessons I ever learned was during a lecture—recorded on analog tape, broadcast on terrestrial radio—by the philosopher Alan Watts. A noted expert in Eastern philosophies, Watts suggested that the idea that modern man is too materialistic is actually false. Being truly materialist—valuing and saving things that we've created, not gobbling them up and disposing of them mindlessly—is a noble endeavor. Sculpture, model airplanes, fashion, a pair of hi-hat cymbals, literature made from paper and ink, these things can bring joy and meaning to our lives in ways that are different—not necessarily better, but different—from the information and enjoyment we get from a YouTube video, a smartphone, or an iPad app.

Humans have relied on the sense of touch, not to mention smell and taste, for hundreds of thousands of years. We've been staring into our smartphones for five. While our imaginations might be going wild online, the evolution of our brains and bodies hasn't caught up with our latest technological breakthroughs. We still need to look at paintings, play sports, hold hands, and feel the vibrations that slug us back in the chest when we pound into a well-tuned bass drum. At the same time, as twenty-first-century artists and craftspeople, we have the obligation, and hopefully the curiosity, to understand and explore the new technologies that could affect our livelihood—and might even blow our minds. But it shouldn't have to be an either-or thing, and we should certainly think harder as a culture about what we are willing to let go of completely in favor of the virtual version of it.

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MODERN DRUMMER magazine (**ISSN** 0194-4533) is published monthly by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.**, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. PERIODICALS MAIL POSTAGE paid at Cedar Grove, NJ 07009 and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2013 by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.** All rights reserved. Reproduction without the permission of the publisher is prohibited.

EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING/ ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES: **MODERN DRUMMER Publications**, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Tel: 973-239-4140. Fax: 973-239-7139. Email: mdinfo@moderndrummer.com.

MODERN DRUMMER welcomes manuscripts and photographic material but cannot assume responsibility for them.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: U.S. $29.95, Canada $33.95, other international $44.95 per year. For two- and three-year subscription prices go to www.moderndrummer.com. Single copies $5.99.

SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE: Modern Drummer, PO Box 274, Oregon, IL 61061-9920. **Change of address:** Allow at least six weeks for a change. Please provide both old and new address. Call 800-551-3786 or 815-732-5283. Phone hours, 8AM–4:30PM Monday–Friday CST, or visit Subscriber Services at www.moderndrummer.com.

MUSIC DEALERS: Modern Drummer is distributed by Hal Leonard Corp., 800-554-0626, sales@halleonard.com, www.halleonard.com/dealers

INTERNATIONAL LICENSING REPRESENTATIVE: Robert Abramson & Associates, Inc., Libby Abramson, President, PO Box 740346, Boyton Beach, FL 33474-0346, abramson@prodigy.net.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Modern Drummer, PO Box 274, Oregon, IL 61061-9920.

Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 41480017 Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: PO Box 875, Stn A, Windsor ON N9A 6P2

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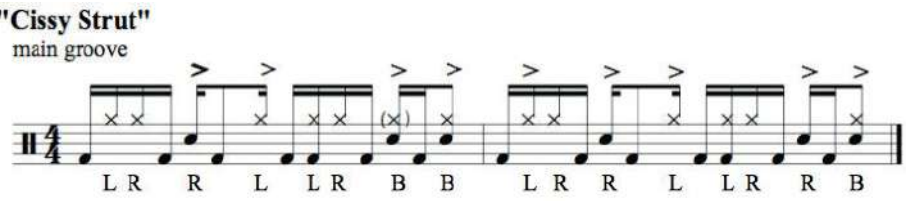
READERS' PLATFORM

"CISSY STRUT" CORRECTION

It is such a great honor for me to be invited to contribute to *Modern Drummer* magazine. It was also a great honor to be asked to contribute transcriptions of some of Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste's grooves ("Zig's Signature Beats," August 2013). However, I realized that the sticking pattern I included for "Cissy Strut" is not the actual pattern that Zig uses. After taking a lesson with the great Stanton Moore and referencing his book *Groove Alchemy*, I realized that Zig's sticking pattern is slightly different. Please see below for that sticking. I am very sorry for any confusion this may have caused. Thanks for reading.

Mike Adamo



STAYING IN THE GAME

I read with great interest the well-written article "Passion and Perseverance" (August) by Bob Girouard. I am a fifty-five-year-old retired paramedic/firefighter. While at the fire station during our downtime (not saving lives, delivering babies, or saving property), I spent a lot of time practicing on a pad, working out of *Stick Control*, and taking drum lessons on my day off, with hopes of being able to play more upon my retirement. When the day finally arrived, I gave myself a retirement gift: the Encore Program at Musicians Institute in Hollywood, California. The time and money were well spent. Finally living the dream!

When I got back home to New Mexico, I started gigging, doing the bar scene, jams, weddings, etc. What's cool is I'm playing with older guys who are retired or ready to retire, who are able to buy very nice higher-end equipment, play out-of-town gigs, and pay for meals and our own rooms if that's not included in the gig arrangements. We make it into nice little weekend vacations with a gig to boot. (We call it a tour.) It's a pretty hip blessing to be at our age and be able to play, teach, record, and continue to hone our skills. Yeah, baby—keeping the fire alive!

Gerald Rodriguez

Your August issue struck me in two ways. First, I've been waiting for someone to recognize Connie Kay's contributions to drumming besides the Modern Jazz Quartet (What Do You Know About…?). I grew up to his swinging feel on Big Joe Turner and LaVern Baker records. I'm glad you didn't overlook him on Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks* and his incredible gutbucket groove on "Tupelo Honey."

But I'm especially glad you brought up the Parkinson's issue ("Passion and Perseverance"). I started suffering symptoms of Parkinson's disease about the same time as Bob Girouard. Like him, I was misdiagnosed at first. People mistook my tremors for drunkenness. I've been playing for fifty years and can work around it, but left-hand tremors cause unwanted ghost notes. Meds help.

I've long wondered how other drummers contend with this mysterious malady. In particular, we should honor Maurice White, a pioneer session man with Chess Records as well as founder of Earth, Wind & Fire. He was diagnosed in the '80s and was forced to retire in 1994. He was barely able to accept his Rock and Roll Hall of Fame award because his disease had progressed so. Others like Bob Girouard and me see living with his fate looming but continue to drum through it. Exercise is one of the best ways to stave off the ravages of PD. Thanks for shedding light on these subjects.

Rex Spurr

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DANNY CAREY

Few bands cause their fans to yearn as intensely for a new album as Tool does. A fusoid side project by the group's drummer, however, does a pretty good job of keeping the faithful occupied in the interim.

Most of us know Danny Carey as the masterly drummer with the iconic progressive-metal band Tool. But *MD* followers are also aware that he portrays somewhat of a drumming alter ego with another group, Volto!, which performed at the MD Festival at NJPAC in Newark, New Jersey, in 2005. At that time, the group consisted of Carey, second drummer/keyboardist/singer Kirk Covington, bassist Lance Morrison, and guitarist John Ziegler. Volto!'s new album, *Incitare*, features Carey, Ziegler, and Morrison; live, the group is joined by Matt Rohde (Jane's Addiction) on keyboards.

"I'd known John Ziegler from playing together in the group Pigmy Love Circus," Carey says, "and from hanging out at the Baked Potato and La Ve Lee in L.A. We were going to see [fusion guitarist] Scott Henderson play all the time, and John wanted to put together a fusion band. We're really rock players at heart, but we all love jazz, so it was pretty organic. I grew up playing in the big band in school, and I played lots of jazz in college."

Carey says that his motivations for playing with Volto! include upping his game and stretching his thought processes. "I learn new things by playing with these guys," he explains. "John, who's the main writer, is great at writing heads, and then we'll help him arrange them and take them further. Most of the songs are in a jazz format, where you play the head and after that the melodic line, and then you do some soloing. After that, pretty much anything goes. Each song is different, and they all tend to write themselves. And a lot of the songs on the record are first takes."

Volto! performed a series of dates this past summer, including the first ever Yestival, at the Susquehanna Bank Center in Camden, New Jersey, a daylong event that also featured Carl Palmer's ELP Legacy, Renaissance, and, of course, headliner Yes. Carey says that Volto! plans to continue recording and touring; as of press time no definitive dates have been set for the next Tool album's release, though the band members have reportedly spent much of 2013 writing material for it.

Text by Joe Gorelick • Photos by Tas Limur

MARKO DJORDJEVIC

The drummer/leader's latest album with the Balkan-fusion group Sveti doesn't just entertain, it educates.

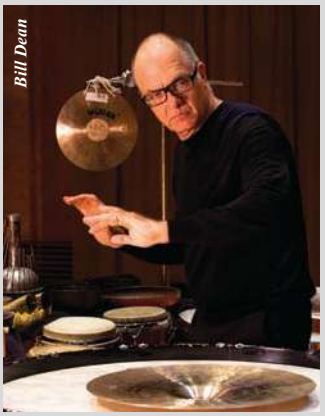
It's rare when a drummer not only breaks down a concept that can add something truly new to our lexicon, but also presents that concept's artistic manifestation on a recording. On his fourth album as a leader, *Something Beautiful (1709-2110)*, Marko Djordjevic explores the possibilities of the left foot. A handful of '60s drummers helped free the hi-hat from a purely timekeeping role; that's where Djordjevic picks up the thread. "I want to enable the left foot on the hi-hat to be a completely singular voice within the integrated flow of the set," he says, "not [in terms of] an ostinato pattern, but as fully improvisational as the rest of the limbs.

"The work involves a three-tiered system," Djordjevic adds. "If I'm playing multiple notes on the hi-hat with my left foot, I try to get up as high as I can, using the calf muscles and all the tendons around the calf and ankle. So if I need to play three notes, the first of the three will come from the highest position of my foot on the pedal, and then my foot will gradually descend on the remaining two notes.

"I don't do heel-toe on the hi-hat, though that works great on the bass drum. I play heel up and get very fast notes beyond a group of three. So when I want to play rolls between the hi-hat and snare, it's all on the front of the foot and my toes, as far to the front as I need to get a good 'chick,' but far enough back to not be completely up in the air. It's important to avoid tension, in both legs."

Djordjevic, who works out his advanced ideas on a five-piece ddrum Paladin set and Zildjian cymbals, says he's getting closer to his ideal. "My book, *The New Frontier*, which really deals with this, was mostly written as a challenge to myself," Marko explains. "It's a turn of fortune when all the ingredients come together to create the new album—that's something beautiful." **Ken Micallef**

NEWS



PERCUSSION MASTER STEVEN SCHICK TO PERFORM SPECIAL SOLO CONCERTS

Noted contemporary percussionist Steven Schick will be performing epic solo concerts at the Miller Theatre at Columbia University in New York City this coming January 30 and February 1. The performances will span the world of solo percussion composition, from its avant-garde beginnings in the 1950s to its current-day manifestations. The first concert, titled Origins, features music from the birth of the solo percussion genre, with works by Stockhausen, Xenakis, and others. The second show, Responses, will feature solo pieces that Schick has commissioned and premiered over the past three decades. Besides being an influential professor and author, Schick has significantly expanded the solo percussion repertoire by commissioning and premiering more than 150 new pieces.

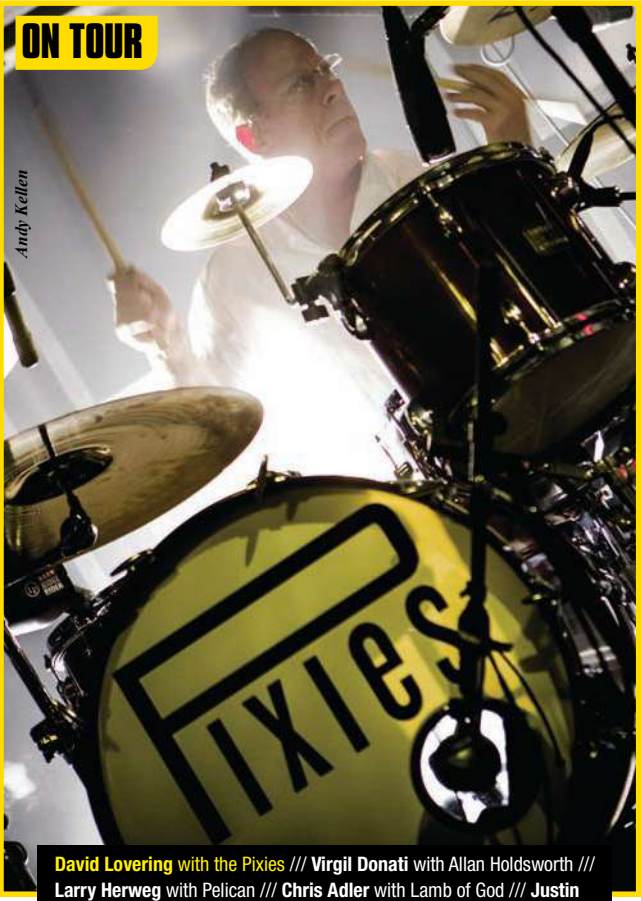
AUGUST BURNS RED'S MATT GREINER HELPS LAUNCH NEW DRUM COMPANY

Matt Greiner, drummer with the Christian metalcore band August Burns Red, has teamed with drum maker Kaleb Kilmer to create Greiner Kilmer Custom Drums. Their first designs include five series of handcrafted, U.S.-made snares that feature a selection of traditional stave and segmented, or block, shells. "The instruments we are building are as different from other drums as they are from each other," Greiner says. "Yet each is designed and built to provide the sound and performance that meets the needs of modern drummers, whether they're used as everyday workhorses on the road or for special occasions in the studio." For more information, visit greinerkilmer.com.

GLEN SOBEL DRUM CLINIC AT EXPLORERS PERCUSSION

This past June, Explorers Percussion of Kansas City, Missouri, hosted a clinic featuring Glen Sobel, who's currently on tour with Alice Cooper. Sobel, a former instructor for Musicians Institute, detailed his work with Cooper, as well as with Orianthi, Jennifer Batten, Tony MacAlpine, and Gary Hoey. He set the tone of the night with his part from the new version of the theme for *Monday Night Football* on ESPN. The energy level stayed intense right through the clinic's closing, when Sobel demonstrated Alex Van Halen's double bass shuffle from "Hot for Teacher." Reps from Sobel's endorsing companies Mapex, Sabian, and Evans were on hand to answer questions from attendees, provide information on their respective brands, and sponsor product giveaways. For more, visit Sobel's Facebook page or explorersdrums.com. **Rick Long**

ON TOUR



Andy Kellen

David Lovering with the Pixies /// **Virgil Donati** with Allan Holdsworth /// **Larry Herweg** with Pelican /// **Chris Adler** with Lamb of God /// **Justin Foley** with Killswitch Engaged /// **Gene Hoglan** with Testament /// **Steve Gere** with Built to Spill /// **Rashid Williams** with John Legend

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WHO'S PLAYING WHAT

Recent Vic Firth artist signings include **Jon Dette** (independent), **Orri Páll Dýrason** (Sigur Rós), **Howie Adams** (independent), **Mike McKee** (Delta Rae), **Cale Parks** (Yeasayer), **Rudy Royston** (Bill Frisell, Dave Douglas), **Lyndon Rochelle** (Esperanza Spalding), **Richard Danielson** (Vintage Trouble), **Gabe Barham** (Sleeping With Sirens), and **Oli Beaudoin** (Kataklysm).

Anton Fig is playing Evans heads and PureSound wires.

Victor DeLorenzo is now a Ludwig artist.

Trey Byrd (Gloriana) is playing Yamaha drums.

TIME TO RETHINK...TIME

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PEDALS AND HARDWARE

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This Month:

SIMON PHILLIPS

New heads. Must be Remo Clear Ambassadors for kicks and toms and a Coated Ambassador for the snare drum.

Hotel towels. When prepping a new kit I always sneak out two nice bath towels to use as dampening for the bass drums. I've been doing this for over thirty years, and I have yet to find anything better.

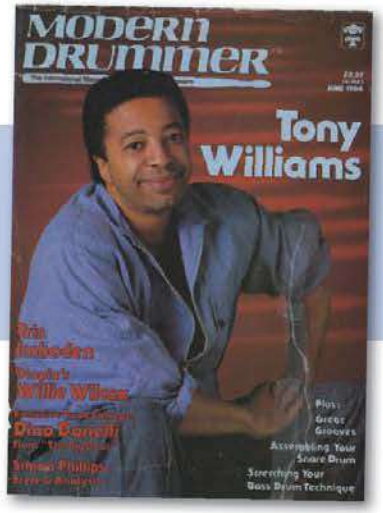
Gaffer's tape. The world can't turn without a roll of decent gaffer's tape, aka duct tape (construction), tank tape (motor sports), or boat tape.

Cordless drill. Preferably a Makita. Why waste all that time with a drum key when you can whip those heads off and on quickly with a fast cordless drill with a tension-rod bit.

Wood plinth. Two sheets of 8'x4'x.75" plywood to set the kit up on. Drums are an acoustic instrument and sound best when set up on a wood surface. I use an eighth-inch bit to drill holes (with the Makita) for the bass drum spurs and hi-hat spurs, to stop them from creeping.

BACK Through the STACK

In June 1984, we spoke with **TONY WILLIAMS** about playing different styles of music convincingly. We noted that even though he was known as a great jazz drummer, when he played rock he didn't sound like a jazz drummer *trying* to play rock; he sounded like a rock drummer. Here's what Tony had to say.

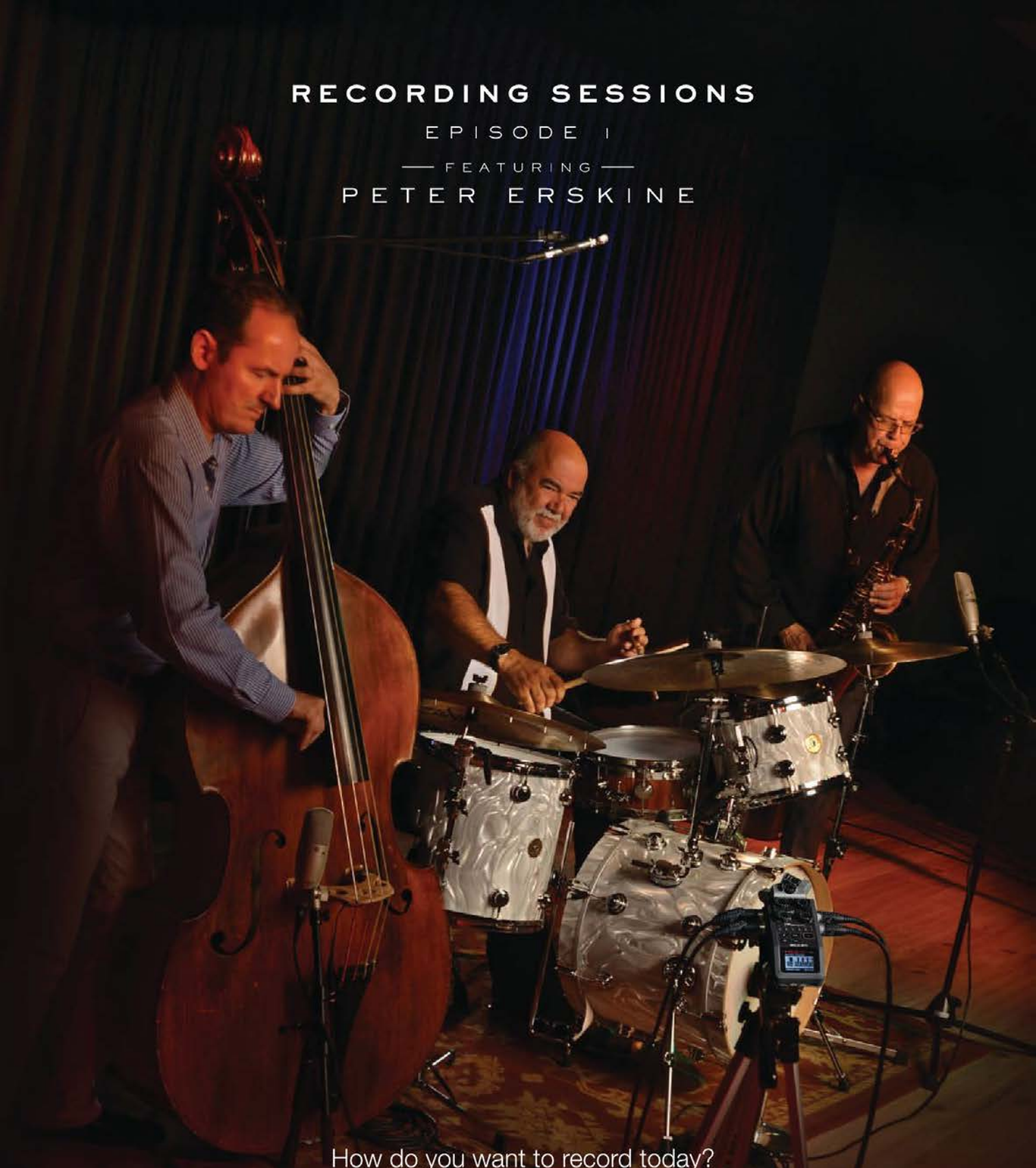


That comes from the aggressiveness. But I must say that it also comes from my training in jazz, because it seems to me that playing jazz gives a drummer more sensitivity for the drumset and much more of a rounded concept.

It's hard to explain that without someone feeling like I'm trying to say that I want them to play jazz. I'm not. I'm saying, "What I want you to do is play the drums better." It just so happens that, if you learned a lot about jazz, practiced for two or three years, and really tried to be good at it, you would become a better drummer.

Drummers spend a long time not feeling good on their instruments because of the things they don't want to do. Everyone has prejudices and fears. But anyone with experience knows that if you do take a couple of years to study something, several years later you will be very glad that you spent that amount of time improving yourself. Sometimes you don't realize how much good something has done you until years later.

To read the entire Tony Williams interview—and all the other great material from the June 1984 issue—go to moderndrummer.com and click on the App Store link.



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by John Emrich

Homemade Room Treatments

I'm curious about the different acoustic treatments I see in photos of studios. My drum room is very loud, and there's no definition in the sound when I record. Is there something I can do to improve this?
MJ

That's a great question, but boy, does it open up a giant can of worms. There are a lot of mathematical calculations that go into figuring out the best acoustic treatment for a room. Modifying a room can also get extremely expensive, so it might be better to talk about some general concepts that you can try in your studio. I am by no means a professional acoustical engineer, but these concepts are relatively easy to understand, and when implemented they should allow for very usable results.

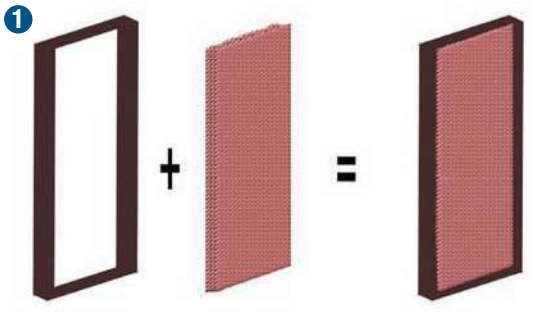
There are basically three things to deal with when getting into acoustic treatment: absorption, diffusion, and bass trapping.

Absorption can be achieved with acoustical foam. The objective is to tame the echo that happens between two parallel surfaces. This undesirable sound, known as flutter echo, can be very detrimental to the clarity of recordings, by adding quick bounce-back delays and an uneven frequency response (i.e., some notes will be louder than others). Diffusion is a process that breaks up sound waves when they hit a surface so that they bounce in different directions. Bass trapping is a method of controlling the low-frequency buildup that often happens in rooms with square corners. Compared with mid and high frequencies, low frequencies are harder to manage, because they are much more omnidirectional, meaning they extend through the room all at once. And when you have an abundance of low frequencies, your recordings will lack definition and tightness. In order to get your drum room sounding good, you need to implement a combination of all three of these concepts.

Let's start by looking at the space. Most drummers work in a square room in their house with an 8' ceiling. Those are not the ideal dimensions for a drum room, but if that's what you have to work with, so be it. You can still get pleasant sounds if you go about treating the space strategically.

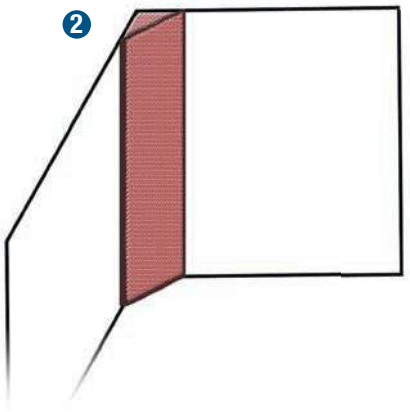
Start with the surface directly behind the drumset. This will be the most important wall to work with, because the drums are closer to it. I prefer to use absorption on that surface and bass trapping in the corners of that wall. A great material for absorption is rock wool, which is a type of insulation that provides much better results than foam. (A 1"-thick piece of rock wool would be equivalent to a much thicker piece of standard foam.) Rock wool, which is rigid and can be purchased in large sizes, is easy to work with, although you'll want to make sure to wear gloves and a mask when building with it.

I simply construct a simple frame out of wood to go around the rock wool, and then I cover the entire thing with a thin piece of fabric (figure 1). The general rule with fabric is that you should be able to blow air through it without resistance; otherwise it will



have reflective qualities and will defeat the goal of absorption. Hang the rock-wool frame directly behind your kit. You do not need to cover the entire wall.

Bass trapping is essential. Without it, your drumset will sound muddy and will lack definition. I like to build bass traps in the corners of the room, which is where bass frequencies add up the most. The approach is simple. You are going to make a triangle frame out of wood that fits in the corner and goes from the floor to the ceiling. You can use lighter-weight wood for this frame. The depth of the triangle is up to you, but I would start with 24". Construct the frame with as many crossbars as you need for support. Once the frame is built, you can secure it to the walls. Then you cut rock wool into triangles that fit inside the triangle and start stacking. If you want to minimize cost, you might want to go up only about halfway with rock wool and then add regular fiberglass insulation for the top half. Cover the frame with the same fabric you used for your absorber, to create a nice look (figure 2).



At this point, set up your drums and play for a bit. You should hear the difference. It would also be great to do a short recording. That will make it easier to hear the results.

Now that you've covered the back wall, it's time to deal with the ceiling area directly above the drumset. A typical

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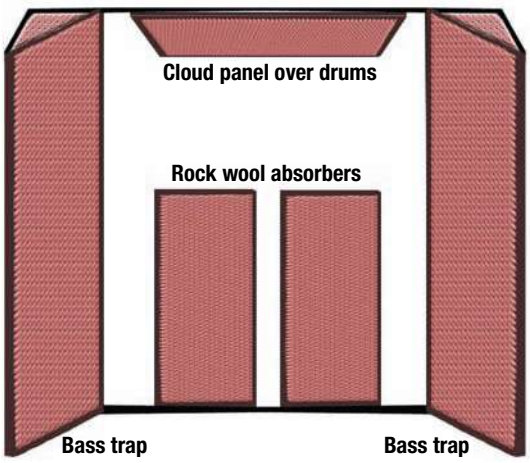
ceiling height of 8' is way too low for optimal drum sounds, because it causes all sorts of bad reflections. You can use the same type of wood frame and rock-wool panel above the drums as you did behind them. Just use eyebolts to make sure the frame is securely anchored to the ceiling. You should hang the frame with a slight upward rise from the back of the kit to the front. That way the ceiling treatment is not parallel to the floor, which will help diffuse the sound waves (figure 3).

Now turn your attention to the sidewalls. Here you could use basic foam, or more rock wool if your budget allows, only this time the pieces can be much thinner. The idea is to negate the reflections bouncing off these surfaces with absorption. Again, you do not need to treat the entire wall. That would kill all of the reflection and make the room sound dead and stuffy. To figure out where to place the absorbers, stand with your back against one of the sidewalls, looking across your drumset. The surface you see directly in front of you needs treatment to break up the reflections. Repeat this process with the other wall, but don't work on an area directly across from another treatment. Go for a checkerboard pattern of treated and nontreated areas. Leaving some parts of the walls alone will preserve the live feel of the room.

3

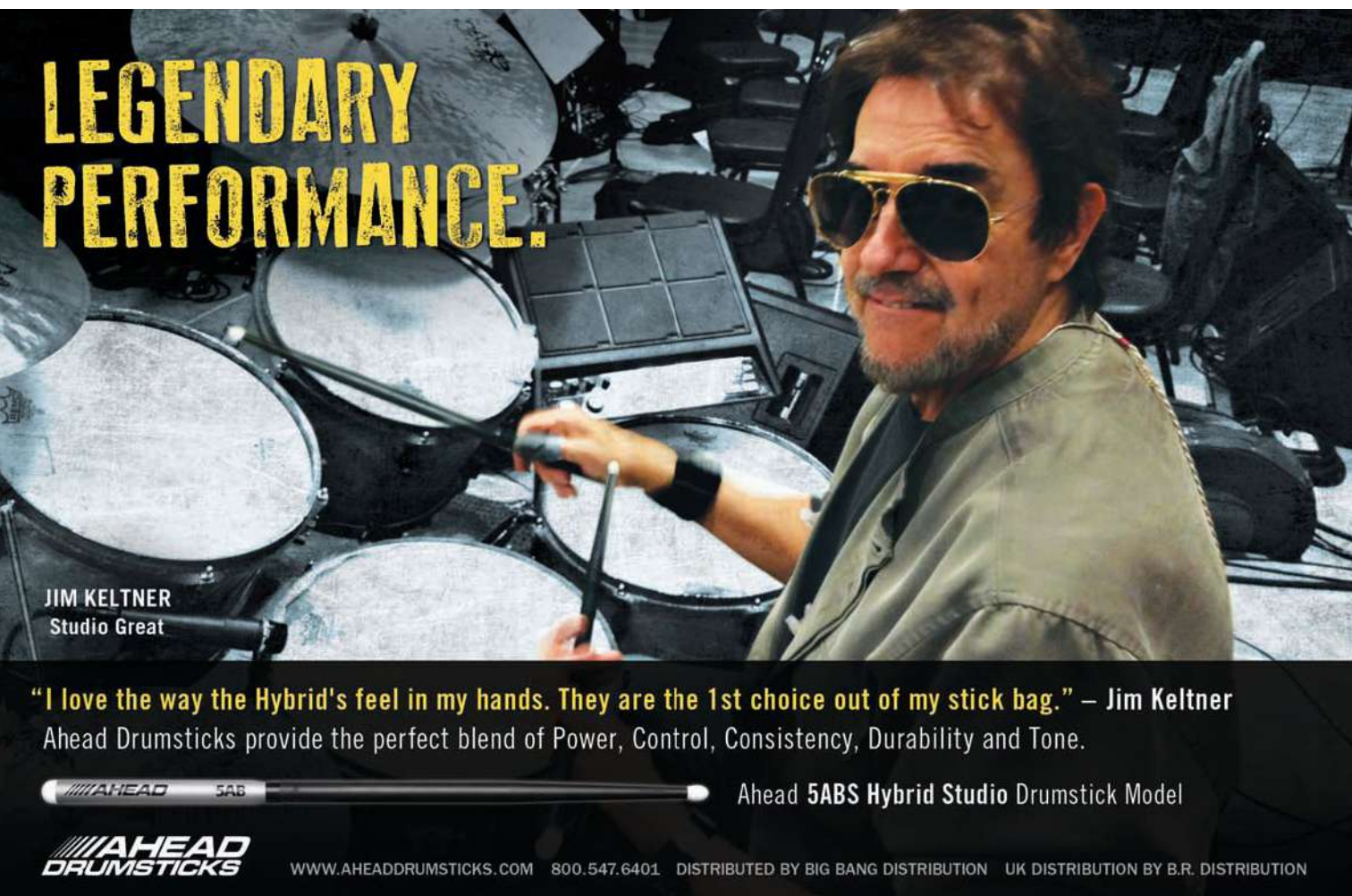


The last thing you need to do is diffuse the wall directly across from the drumset. Commercial diffusers can be very pricey, so I prefer to simply place a large bookcase on that wall and fill it with books, magazines, DVDs, and other small items of different sizes. The idea is to break up the space so that there aren't a lot of large parallel surfaces facing the drums.

Throughout the process of treating your room, be sure to take breaks to play your drums. You will hear a change in the sound each time you add a new treatment. When you're happy with the results, stop. You don't want too much treatment.

There are a lot of mathematical equations that go into making absorbers, diffusers, and bass traps, to correctly match the size of a room. The concepts discussed in this article are intended to serve as simple examples of ways to address acoustical problems in a more project-based studio. For optimal results, you should consult a professional.

John Emrich is an expert in the field of electronic percussion. He has produced sample libraries on FXpansion's BFD2 and Eco platforms and has produced products for *Modern Drummer*, Platinum Samples, Cymbal Masters, Mapex, Alesis, Pearl, WaveMachine Labs, Native Instruments, Yamaha, and Zildjian. For more info, visit johnemrich.com.



The Modern Drummer *Readers Poll*

Cast your vote in the drum world's **most important poll!**

Another year filled with great drumming performances, recordings, clinics, and educational materials is coming to a close. Here's your chance to call out the players, albums, and multimedia packages that made the biggest impression on you in the past twelve months.

Look at the list to the right. Then go to **moderndrummer.com** and vote for your favorite nominees—or write in your own choices.

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MD Readers Poll Categories and Nominees

HALL OF FAME: Carmine Appice, Dino Danelli, Levon Helm, Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste, Ed Shaughnessy

MVP: Vinnie Colaiuta, Dave Grohl, Mike Portnoy, Antonio Sanchez, Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson

PROG: Matt Garstka, Mike Mangini, Marco Minnemann, Mike Portnoy, Todd Sucherman

MAINSTREAM ROCK: Robin Diaz, Darren King, Joey Kramer, Jason Sutter, Ronnie Vannucci

JAZZ: Terri Lyne Carrington, Mark Guiliana, Tommy Igoe, Antonio Sanchez, Kendrick Scott

POP: Carter Beauford, Brian Frasier-Moore, Eric Hernandez, George "Spanky" McCurdy, Mark Schulman

STUDIO: Matt Chamberlain, Vinnie Colaiuta, Victor Indrizzo, Greg Morrow, Dylan Wissing

METAL: Chris Adler, Arejay Hale, Gene Hoglan, Ray Luzier, Travis Orbin

R&B: Gorden Campbell, George "Spanky" McCurdy, Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste, Aaron Spears, Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson

ALTERNATIVE: Jean-Paul Gaster, Thomas Hedlund, Deantoni Parks, Joey Waronker, Jon Wurster

FUSION: Billy Cobham, Vinnie Colaiuta, Chris Dave, Thomas Pridgen, Robert "Sput" Searight

COUNTRY: Sean Fuller, Chris McHugh, Rich Redmond, Jim Riley, Chuck Tilley

UP & COMING: Miles Arntzen, Jess Bowen, Justin Brown, Benjamin Cowan, Cully Symington

PERCUSSIONIST: Taku Hirano, Pete Lockett, Pedrito Martinez, Mauro Refosco, Arturo Stable

CLINICIAN/EDUCATOR: Matt Halpern, Mike Johnston, Rod Morgenstein, Rich Redmond, Gil Sharone

EDUCATIONAL BOOK: Joe Bergamini, *Neil Peart: Taking Center Stage*; Roy Burns, *Solo Secrets of the Left Hand and Bass Drum*; Claus Hessler, *Daily Drumset Workout*; Hector Morales, *The Afro-Peruvian Percussion Ensemble*; Swiss Chris, *Modern Drumset Stickings*

EDUCATIONAL DVD: Gorden Campbell, *Secrets of the Working Drummer*; Joe McCarthy, *Afro-Cuban Big Band Play Along Series, Volume II*; George "Spanky" McCurdy, *Off Time/On Time*; Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste, *The Originator of New Orleans Funky Drumming*; Aquiles Priester, *Top 100 Drum Fills*

RECORDED PERFORMANCE: Joey Castillo, Dave Grohl, and Jon Theodore, *…Like Clockwork* (Queens of the Stone Age); Mike Portnoy, *The Winery Dogs*; Thomas Pridgen, *Pinnick Gales Pridgen*; Antonio Sanchez, *New Life*; Brad Wilk, *13* (Black Sabbath)

GRETSCH

RENOWN RN1 DRUMSET

by Michael Dawson

DIGITALLY ENHANCED
moderndrummer.com

The Renown series was devised to offer working drummers a sturdy, tour-ready kit with all the classic Gretsch appointments (30-degree bearing edges, die-cast hoops, rock maple shells), for a more manageable price. This year, the company overhauled the line with some nice cosmetic and functional upgrades, while maintaining the series' trademark contemporary-yet-classic sound. We were sent a four-piece RN1-E8246 Euro shell pack in satin white finish ($2,615.99), plus a matching 6.5x14 snare ($500.99).

Classic Gretsch warmth and focus plus modern power and durability makes the Renown RN1 drumset a go-to choice for any situation.

SHELL PACKS

Gretsch offers four Renown shell packs: a three-piece Rock option with a 16x24 kick and 9x13 and 16x16 toms; a four-piece Groove kit with a 16x20 kick and 7x10, 8x12, and 14x14 toms; a three-piece Euro with an 18x22 kick and 8x12 and 14x16 toms; and the four-piece Euro setup we have for review, which includes an 18x22 kick and 7x10, 8x12, and 14x16 toms. Other available component drums include 7x8, 8x10, and 10x13 rack toms, a 16x18 floor tom, and a 5x14 snare. None of the bass drums are drilled, and each pack comes with the appropriate number of G1-SLLRM tom clamps. Finish options include cherry burst, satin black, silver oyster pearl, gloss natural, blue metal, and satin white.

NEW AND IMPROVED

The essential elements that comprise the Renown series—all-maple shells, precise 30-degree edges, die-cast hoops—remain unchanged, but a select choice of upgrades was implemented to make these drums better functioning and more appealing to an even wider range of drummers. First off, Gretsch no longer uses the large, stop-sign-shaped Renown badge, replacing it with a round, two-tone, silver-over-black-nickel version that ties in with the company's classic aesthetic while offering a rich and modern look. On the more functional side, Gretsch redesigned the GTS tom mount to be lower in mass but stronger, and it added vintage-style, round "T-Wing" thumbscrews to the mounts, as well as to the telescoping bass drum spurs and floor tom leg brackets. These classy-looking thumbscrews held the hardware securely and were super-easy to use.

The most significant change to the Renown series is the reengineered GTS tom suspension system, which is lighter and takes up less real estate on the drum than the previous version did. Instead of grabbing multiple tension rods at the point where the rods meet the lug casings, the new system features two horizontal bars that affix to the top and bottom of two lug casings via rubber gaskets and elongated tension-rod receivers. As a result, the new GTS mount is more stable, which means less bounce when you play, and there's no strain on the tension rods themselves. The problems I've had with some suspension systems are that they cover up too much of the drums' finish, extend too far off the drum, and are a nuisance during head replacement. The new GTS eliminates all of those issues, while still allowing the drums to sing with unencumbered resonance.

IN ACTION

I began our playing test by tuning the drums a bit higher than usual, with the bottom heads a major second higher than the tops, and adjusting the pitch relationship between the toms and snare to achieve a nice major chord. The floor tom was pitched to A, the middle tom to D, the high tom to F#, and the snare to A. The bass drum was tensioned about a turn and a half above slack but was not tuned to a specific pitch.

While I didn't intend to keep the kit tensioned that tightly for the review, it sounded so nice and melodic, with clean, rich tones and a crisp, snappy attack, that I ended up improvising on it, in a loose, funky fusion style à la Jack DeJohnette, for well over an hour. The combination of strong (not sharp) attack, pure pitch, long sustain, and focused overtones made this kit a joy to play and easy to record. The toms, which are outfitted with Remo Clear Emperor batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, required no muffling. The bass drum, which came with a Clear Powerstroke 3 batter and a ported Coated Powerstroke 3 front, also sounded great wide open, but I ended up adding two Remo mufflers inside to bring out a bit more punch. The 6.5x14 snare was super-crispy and responsive, with plenty of warmth and body, plus focused, pure overtones.

Next, I backed off each tension rod a quarter turn and then checked the pitch relationship between the toms and snare to make sure the intervals remained consistent. The floor tom has eight lugs and the snare has ten, but the rack toms have only five. For this reason, the rack toms were more sensitive to tension adjustments, so I had to detune the floor tom and snare a bit further to maintain an even spread. This tuning, which I would consider to be medium, emphasized a broader and richer sustain from the toms, with a clean and dramatic "doom" and a wider snare tone. The pitch on the toms and snare remained very pure, and the attack was still strong and snappy. The bass drum became punchier and more grounded, with a little less boom. For an all-around workhorse drum sound that would work great at unamplified gigs or under microphones on stage or in the studio, you really can't do much better than this.

An additional quarter turn of the tuning rods brought out fatter, warmer tones, while still retaining pure pitches and a clear, precise attack. (The tuning accuracy and healthy attack characteristics of this kit can largely be attributed to the die-cast hoops.) The snare required a bit of muffling; a few layers of 1x2 duct tape worked great. But the toms and kick sounded perfect as they were. With the kit tuned this way, my instinct was to play more dynamically yet deliberately, closer to the styles of drummers like Steve Gadd and Jim Keltner.

A KIT FOR ALL OCCASIONS

The Renown series was designed primarily for touring drummers, but after our testing we would venture to say that the RN1 is a kit for *all* drummers, regardless of the genre or situation. It's easy to tune, produces some of the cleanest and strongest tones we've heard, has a simple yet rich appearance, and is built to last. Add an additional 20" bass drum, a 14" floor tom, and maybe a 5x14 snare, and I'd feel confident saying that I'd have all the tools I'd need for any gig or session.

gretschdrums.com

DW COLLECTOR'S SERIES CONCRETE AND THIN ALUMINUM SNARES

by Miguel Monroy

DIGITALLY ENHANCED
moderndrummer.com

DW is renowned for producing top-quality drums and hardware, and the company has had a consistent output of innovative ideas that meet the needs of the drumming community. The two DW Collector's series snares we have for review—an unusual concrete model and a classic rolled-aluminum drum—are prime examples of this combo of innovation and practicality.

Whether you're searching for something entirely different or looking for a drum that elicits classic versatility, these new snares are worth checking out.

6.5X14 CONCRETE

Let's be honest: The thought of a concrete snare is both mysterious and just plain awesome. As we prepared to test this drum, we had two important questions that needed to be answered: Is it really heavy, and what on earth does it sound like?

We received the larger 6.5x14 version of the Concrete snare ($1,269.40), but the drum is also available in 5.5x14. It features a raw soapstone finish with satin chrome hardware and is equipped with DW's MAG magnetic throw-off and three-position butt plate. The throw-off and butt plate allowed effortless adjustments between strainer positions and enabled us to easily fine-tune the amount of strainer contact with the bottom head. The body of the drum is a thin, cast 5.5 mm shell with 45-degree bearing edges. The material used to create the shell is a combination of ground bluestone and special polymers. I was happy to learn that weight was actually a nonissue, as the drum felt about as heavy as the nickel-plated brass snare that I usually play.

As I began to explore the sonic possibilities of the concrete drum, I was blown away by its explosive yet super-controlled attack. With the batter cranked fairly tight, the tone that emanated after every hit was focused and dry, with very little decay. The drum maintained a lot of depth at that high tuning and was well suited for nearly any style of music, though I preferred it for more aggressive and heavier styles. When I started playing with the snares off, I couldn't believe how much depth

Thin Aluminum

and tone projected with every crack of a rimshot. It was almost like firing a pistol with each hit. When I lowered the tuning, the sound became more like a cannon. The concrete drum really did sound completely different from the wood- and metal-shell snares that most drummers are accustomed to.

5.5X14 THIN ALUMINUM

Drummers have relied on metal-shell snare drums for years, for their versatility and resonance. Unlike its heavy-gauge cousin in the Collector's series, the 5.5x14 Thin Aluminum snare ($662) features a 1 mm rolled shell, which proved to be packed with even more resonance and overtones. (A 6.5x14 model is also available.)

The drum has a matte-gray powder-coated finish with chrome hardware, and it too was equipped with a MAG throw-off and three-position butt plate. The shell features rolled bearing edges. Although I could control the resonance and overtones with any number of conventional muffling methods, I never really needed to. When the drum was set at a high or low tuning, the resonance and overtones of the aluminum shell were never overwhelming but were balanced perfectly to deliver the exact piercing crack that I wanted, with just the right amount of sustain.

I tried to push the limits of the Thin Aluminum drum's tuning range at both ends of the spectrum and found that it maintained an aggressive attack and resonance throughout. The thin shell also provided a lot of sensitivity, which I appreciated for quieter and more intricate playing. The versatility of this drum would make it a great choice for someone looking for a single snare that can handle many musical genres and endure a lifetime of use.

dwdrums.com

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GAAI

CHARCOAL WALNUT DRUMSET

by Eric Novod

Gaai Drums was founded in 2008 by the veteran drummer and drum maker Masayoshi Nakamura. Having worked for many years for major Japanese and American drum companies, Nakamura wanted to branch out on his own to create drums with what he describes as the "ultimate balanced sound." He is succeeding in his task, with exciting drums featuring beautiful and innovative craftsmanship. If you're wondering about the name, it's actually Nakamura's lifelong nickname, and it's pronounced like "guy." ("Ga" and "Ai" are alternate pronunciations for "Masa" and "Yoshi" in Japanese.)

Great sounds and a one-of-a-kind veneer ÿnish from a seasoned veteran in the custom-drum industry.

Up for review is a gorgeous Gaai kit consisting of an eight-lug, 8-ply, 6x13 snare; a six-lug, 6-ply, 7x10 rack tom; an eight-lug, 7-ply, 13x14 floor tom; and an eight-lug, 8-ply, 15x18 bass drum. All of the shells are North American maple, and the toms feature wood hoops. The unique charcoal walnut finish isn't a paint or wrap; it's a custom veneer made from hand-cut strips of wood. According to Nakamura, "At first, we cut veneer strips and dye them with custom ink to create two shades. Then we put the strips together to make the spiral pattern, and wrap the shell with these veneer strips." After a drying process and a coat of clear paint, the drums receive a "cloud" finish, which creates a "slightly reserved brilliance" that Nakamura suggests has a luxury feel.

Another striking and unique construction choice is the use of cork in the spacers between the hardware and shells on the toms. Not only does the cork help keep the pieces lightweight, but it also allows the

drums to sing and breathe freely. It looks cool too!

THE SOUND

These drums sound exactly like you want them to—warm, with a strong, medium-long decay, which is impressive for a smaller kit with wood hoops. While they would be perfect for a quiet-burn jazz gig, the most surprising aspect of the drums is how much sound they can produce and project. Working from the bottom up, the crown jewel was the bass drum. I could do whatever I wanted with it, and it supported my efforts. Unmuffled, the drum had a sustain that was medium-long and perfectly balanced. The tone shined through when I played at a low/medium volume, and the drum sang and exploded when I attacked it. Its dynamic range was off the charts for an 18".

The toms sounded great when set at medium-low or medium tension, nicely complementing the range of possibilities from the bass drum. The toms choked out a little bit when tuned very high, but in a cool, attack-heavy way.

The snare provided a clean, crisp, natural sound and could be tuned just about any way, and it was more receptive to different drumhead types than most snares I've played. A thinner head gave the drum a wide-open, jazz-influenced sound, while a medium-weight head offered a nice crack with some substance underneath.

Although we would say that these drums would work best in a jazz setting due to their smaller size and wood hoops, they are actually perfectly suitable for a number of styles, including light rock, folk, country, pop, R&B, reggae, and Latin jazz. This kit really is a standout.

gaaidrums.com

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REMO

WHITE SUEDE EMPEROR DRUMHEADS

by Michael Dawson

Remo's Suede series drumheads were created to serve as a balance between the bright and open resonance of clear heads and the warmth and midrange articulation of coated versions. The actual film of Suede drumheads is textured on both sides, rather than being sprayed with a coating, and the line is available in various weights (Diplomat, Ambassador, Emperor, and Powerstroke 3).

White Suede Emperors offer a middle ground between bright and open and deep and punchy tones without sounding middle-of-the-road.

Regular Suede heads are made from clear Mylar, while Black Suede models are created from Remo's Ebony film. White Suedes are textured versions of the Smooth White plastic. The White Suede Ambassador model features 1-ply, 10 mil film, and the White Suede Emperor, which we have for review here, is constructed from two plies of 7.5 mil film.

The first thing I noticed about the White Suede Emperor was its soft feel. Whereas regular coating is coarse and gritty, these heads have a smoother, more finely graded yet sticky texture that's quite similar to that of calfskin. If you hit the head lightly at an angle, you can really hear—and feel—how the White Suede grabs the stick tip a bit. Being primarily a user of coated single-ply drumheads, I really enjoyed how these heads had the familiar warmth and attack of regular coated models yet could produce the big, punchy sound required in most modern pop or rock music. They can be tuned low for depth and impact or high for attack and clearer pitches, which makes them all-around winners in our book.

remo.com

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SNAREWEIGHT

MAGNETIC BRASS DAMPENER

by Michael Dawson

Duct tape, tissues, rings, cotton balls, tea towels… We drummers have been on a longtime quest to find the "perfect" muffling to achieve the best snare drum tone possible. Manufacturers have been quick to come up with their own commercialized versions, from basic stick-on gels to the most extravagant felt-and-lever clamp-on systems. The Snareweight is one of the most recent dampeners to enter the fold, offering a simple yet unique twist on the age-old problem of controlling excessive overtones. It's made of solid brass, so it has a lot of mass packed into a small 1.875x2.375 body, which provides a much more effective muffling effect (by pressing down on the drumhead to restrict its vibrations) than a similarly sized piece of tape or tissue. The dampening is done via a removable leather insert that can be flipped for more or less muffling. (A separate three-pack of leather pieces of different thicknesses is sold separately for $13.99.)

Sleek and simple, the magnetic Snareweight dampener offers a fresh approach to drum muffling.

The most intriguing feature of the Snareweight is that it has a strong magnet on the underside, near the cutout that goes over the hoop, so it will hold on to triple-flange steel hoops tightly and won't pop off after extended use or exposure to humid climates. If your snare has brass, die-cast, or single-flange hoops, the Snareweight can be secured in place with a thumbscrew.

As opposed to the dark, muted tone you often get when you cover your snare head with tape or towels, the Snareweight provides subtler dampening that effectively soaks up the long-sustaining bright overtones without killing all of the high-end energy that you need for the drum to maintain presence and power. If you've ever used a billfold to muffle your snare, the results are similar. But the Snareweight is more reliable and more sophisticated looking, and it holds its position much better. Now, whether or not those advantages outweigh its cost is up to you. List price: $44.99.

snareweight.com •

BILLDIDIT

COADY CYMBAL TOPPER AND XCHANGER

by Michael Dawson

Billdidit is a relatively new company formed to commercialize the drum accessory creations of inventor Bill Coady. Its first product, the Coady Clutch, which we reviewed in the September 2011 issue, was a magnetic hi-hat drop clutch. Two of Billdidit's latest additions are the quick-release Coady Cymbal Topper ($21.95) and the lever-adjustable Coady xChanger auxiliary hi-hat system ($37.99).

The Cymbal Topper is simply designed and super-easy to use. Just remove the thumbscrew, felts, and washers from your cymbal stand and thread the Topper onto the rod. To add a cymbal, remove the upper portion of the Topper by squeezing it in the center with your thumb and first finger, and then slide it off. Next, remove the top felt, place your cymbal, replace the top felt, and then slide the top back into place. The entire process can take as little as five seconds, and you don't have to worry about thumbscrews spinning off and disappearing under your bass drum. The Cymbal Topper currently fits only .375" cymbal stands.

A lever-activated X-hat and a quick-release cymbal washer—two new gadgets with very useful applications.

The xChanger X-hat is designed to fit into the .5" clamp of any boom-arm cymbal stand. It comes with an 8" pull rod that goes into the boom clamp, two felt stems, and the xChanger body, which has a swiveling arm that adjusts the amount of tension between the cymbals, from tight to washy. To set up the xChanger, first insert the pull rod into your boom stand. Then slide on one of the felt stems. Next, add your bottom cymbal, followed by the spring and your top cymbal. Now add the second felt stem and the xChanger body, with the black side facing you and the left side of the lever arm facing down. Press the body down until you reach the desired tension for your tightest X-hat sound, and then fix the body in place by tightening the drum-key-operated screw on the side of the body. To loosen the tension between the cymbals, press down on the right side of the lever with your hand or a drumstick.

The xChanger worked great and was easy to position within the kit. Making adjustments was very quick, and there were a lot of tonal options to explore between loose and tightly closed cymbals. The spring is very strong, so it will take a bit of strength to bring the cymbals together during the initial setup, but once locked into place the xChanger is going to stay put for the duration of the gig.

billdidit.ca

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ROLAND

BT-1 BAR TRIGGER PAD

by Michael Dawson

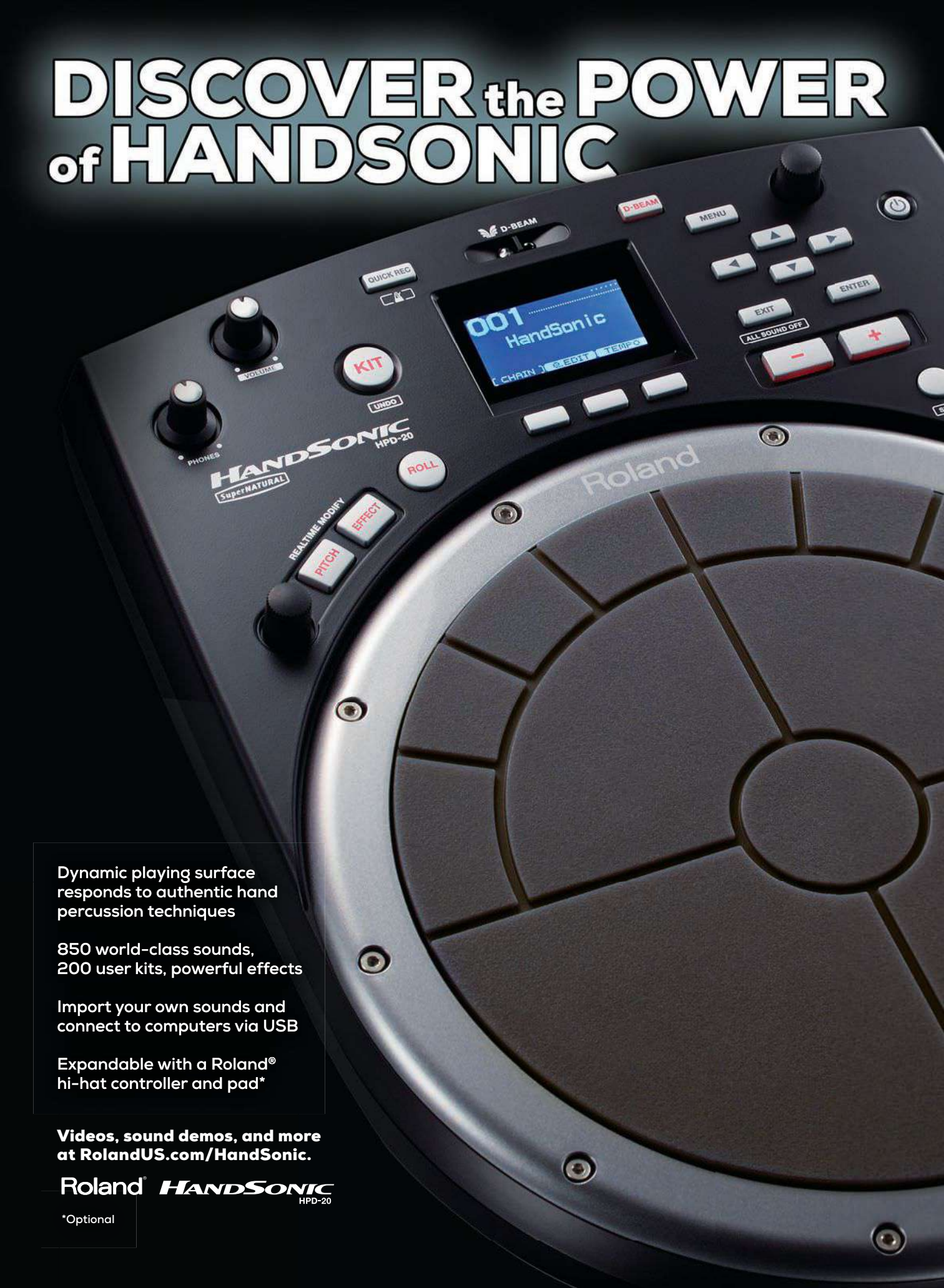
The BT-1 is a simple solution for drummers looking to add a basic one-trigger pad to their setup. It can be attached to acoustic drums under a tension rod, or it can be mounted to a Roland V-Pad or to a cymbal/percussion stand that has a .375" to .5" rod.

The body of the BT-1 is curved to contour to the shape of the drum it's attached to, which places the 6.75" rubber striking surface within easy reach. The pad responded as well as any rubber trigger pad we've played, and it had a comfortable, soft feel with good rebound. Roland suggests that the BT-1 be used to trigger sounds and to control various functions, like loop start/stop, effects on/off, and tap tempo. It handled each of those tasks with minimal fuss and no misfires, whether used with Roland modules like V-Drums brains and SPD percussion controllers, or in conjunction with a trigger-to-MIDI interface and computer software. Its compact size allows the BT-1 to be placed practically anywhere on an acoustic kit, which makes it much more versatile than round rubber pads for incorporating electronics into hybrid electronic/acoustic setups where you want to be able to trigger one-shot sounds from different locations, be it under the ride cymbal, over the hi-hat, or on an auxiliary snare rim. It's kind of hard to believe Roland hasn't put out something like this sooner. List price is $129.50.

Looking to sneak an electronic pad into your kit where a standard round pad won't ÿt? Get a BT-1.

rolandus.com

DISCOVER the POWER of HANDSONIC



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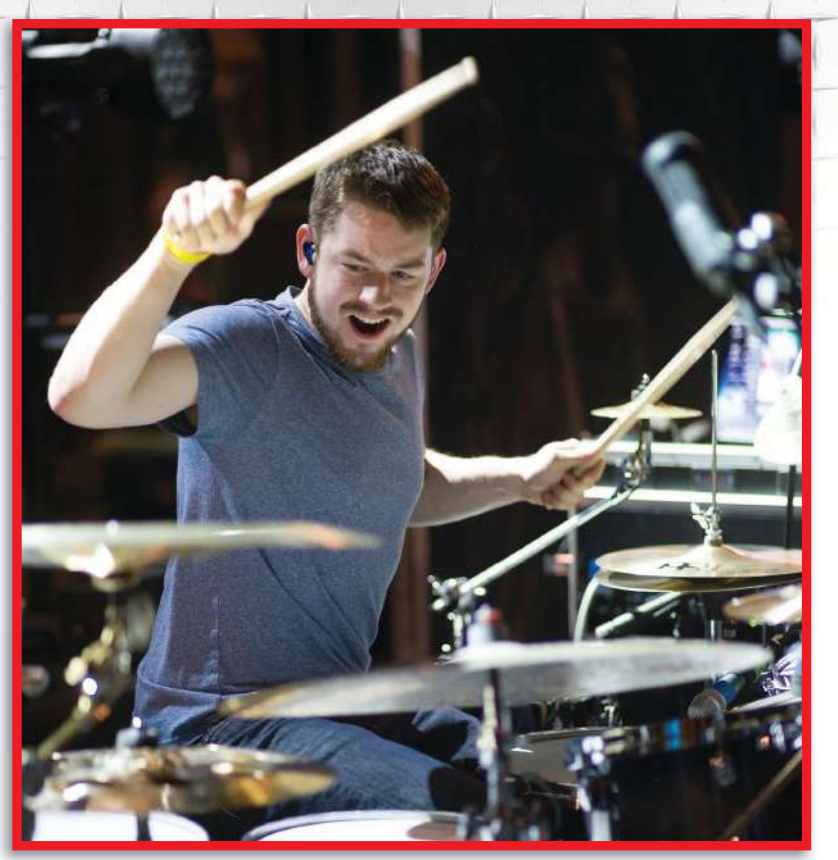
GEARING UP DRUMKIT DETAILS, ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE

Interview by John Martinez • Photos by Alex Solca

Animals as Leaders'
MATT GARSTKA



Drums: Tama Starclassic Performer B/B series
A. 5.5x14 Starclassic brass snare
B. 5.5x10 Metalworks snare
C. 6x8 tom
D. 6.5x10 tom
E. 7x12 tom
F. 12x14 floor tom
G. 14x16 floor tom
H. 18x22 bass drum

"My setup originated from a five-piece kit," Garstka says. "From there it really expanded. Sometimes I'll have just one rack tom, or none, as a challenge, and I would definitely suggest that. But having more tones helps with creativity. You have a larger tone range and more ideas to physically get out on the kit. I was experimenting with the 8" tom. I've seen fusion cats use it before, so it was one more avenue to go down to expand my creativity.

"I'm a fan of bubinga—the low-end punch you get from it. And then birch has some serious projection, so those coupled is perfect for the music I'm playing with Animals.

"I'm only 5' 6", so to get up on the toms for the speedy stuff I'm doing, I need the most advantages I can get. The shallow toms and sitting high give me leverage on top of the drums and help me put my weight down."

Cymbals: Meinl
1. 13" Byzance Traditional hi-hats
2. 6" Byzance Brilliant splash
3. 18" Byzance Jazz Extra Thin crash
4. 6" Byzance Traditional splash
5. 20" Byzance Traditional Medium crash
6. 8" Generation X Electro Stack
7. 22" Byzance Extra Dry Medium ride
8. 20" Byzance Traditional China
9. 16" Classics Custom Trash crash stacked on 14" Generation X China with jingles
10. 18" Mb20 Rock China

"These Traditional hi-hats cut more and have that darker quality. I sometimes swap out the 20" Traditional China for a 20" Extra Dry. The Traditional cuts a little more, but I love the sound of the Extra Dry. It's a tough choice, because sometimes I feel like I need to project more in the overheads. But if you're playing in a smaller cub, definitely go with the Extra Dry."

Hardware: Tama Iron Cobra Rolling Glide double pedal, Iron Cobra hi-hat stand, Roadpro tom and cymbals stands, and 1st Chair Round Rider Hydraulix throne

"I like to feel the dynamic of my pedal; I don't like feathery pedals. When you go to stomp on them, the response isn't accurate in the power department."

Heads: Remo Emperor X main snare batter and Ambassador bottom, Coated Vintage Emperor auxiliary snare and tom batters and Ambassador bottoms, Coated Powerstroke 3 14" floor tom batter, and Coated Powerstroke 4 bass drum batter with Falam Slam pad and Coated Emperor front head; Moongel or gaffer's tape used as needed

"This is a new snare for me, so I've been experimenting and switching out a bunch of heads to find the true sound qualities of the drum and the heads.

"You would think I tune my drums high for speed, but they're actually tuned low. I want it to feel and sound like it's a bigger drum than it really is, but I also want the response to be quick. That's why I have the Hyper-Drive toms—they facilitate chopping at high speeds and getting a studio-type sound where every tone is heard. Also, playing with heavy sticks helps with the power aspect and getting a fatter sound.

"The bottom heads are tuned a little higher so you feel some tension. That way I know a lug isn't going to come loose from bashing."

Sticks: Vic Firth Tomas Haake signature model

Electronics: MacBook Pro to run visuals and audio, Saffire interface, Ultimate Ears in-ear monitors

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SHOP TALK

Year-End Maintenance

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO RETURNING RUSTED, ROAD-WORN DRUMS BACK TO NEW

Story by Kevin Schuenemann • Photos by Miguel Monroy

So it's the end of the year. Your drums have clocked more miles in the last twelve months than most cars see in a lifetime, and it shows. The drastic changes in humidity and weather haven't been kind to the once-magnificent salmon sparkle finish, and there's rust eating away at your hoops. Not to mention the countless dings and scratches the kit has endured from falling guitars, rough load-ins, and malfunctioning hardware. Here are some easy steps to help return your drums to a state that's much closer to brand new.

TENSION RODS AND LUGS

Take your drums apart entirely, but be sure you remember where everything goes. Take pictures if you need to, because every screw, lug, hoop, spacer, insert, and spring must come off the shell.

Submerge the tension rods in a container of Windex. Put the hoops to the side; you'll tackle those later. Spray each removed lug with Windex and let it air-dry on a towel. Allowing the cleaner to settle on the metal makes the dirt pool together and leaves a deeper shine once it's wiped away.

After you remove the screws that hold the lugs to the shells, put them in the Windex as well. Just be careful not to get the spacers wet. They should be cleaned with a dry towel.

Remove the tension rods and lug screws from the Windex and place them on a towel to dry. Once dry, put them in a cup of automatic-transmission fluid for about two minutes, and then dry them with a rag. This removes small metal filings and prevents stripping of the threads. The fluid also helps stop rust from forming. This can work wonders, even in the most humid environments. (Some drummers prefer to dab the screw ends in petroleum jelly as a lubricant instead.)

After the lugs have air-dried, remove the insert and spring from inside each lug and put them in the cup of Windex. Then wipe them with a towel. Don't do this step for tube lugs, as the glue that holds the end pieces can loosen. Instead put one or two drops of transmission fluid in the inside of the lug and thread a tension rod as far as it can go.

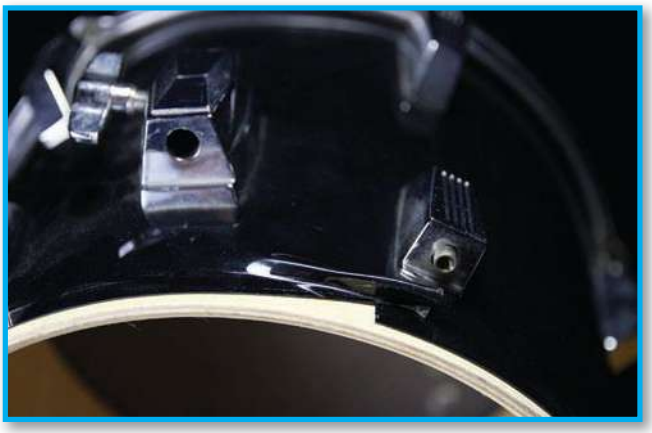
If there is significant rust buildup on any metal surface, try scraping it off with a wire brush or the brush wheel on a grinder. If the grinder can't take off the rust, then the metal is compromised and you should replace that piece. Lug or tension-rod failure during a show can be a disaster, so be diligent in replacing damaged hardware.

WHAT TO OIL

Oil all moving parts, such as bass drum spurs, snare strainers, and pedals, taking extra care to get inside the bearings. You can use any oil, but my personal favorites are WD-40, motor oil, and transmission fluid. If your kick pedal still squeaks after it's been lubricated, try putting a cigarette-length pipe cleaner inside the spring. This will muffle the gasping action as the spring opens when you press on the pedal. If the squeak is caused by a side-to-side motion, try tightening the screws on the bottom of the footboard. If it still continues, and you're using a single-chain or strap-drive pedal, you may want to purchase a new one with a dual-chain drive, which helps prevent side-to-side movement.

SHELLS

Now that everything is drying and you have a bare shell, gently wipe the shells inside and outside, and on the bearing edges, with a dry towel. Look closely for separation in your plies or wrap. If you notice a gap large enough for a dime to fit into, apply glue from an eyedropper or injection needle and add pressure using cardboard or bent wood and a C clamp. Don't over-tighten the clamp, and use the glue very sparingly. A few drops go a long way. You can always add more, but you can't always take it away. Putting in too much glue can drastically change the sound and volume of your drums.



For wrapped drums, spray Windex or furniture cleaner on the plastic and wipe it off immediately. For paint and lacquer finishes, spray the outside of the shell with furniture cleaner, and then apply a good car polish. Buffing really brings out a nice shine and conceals almost any minor scratch. Be careful not to use products containing ammonia, which will fade your finish. And don't use anything that's too abrasive, to avoid scratching the surface.

If you're polishing your drums with a towel, plan on wiping the drums every day for the next two weeks, because the polish will make the finish look cloudy if it's not wiped in entirely. Touch up any cracks or big scratches in the finish with paint pens from the drum company, if they're available. If not, nail polish works great. You should always try to use the drum manufacturer's recommended polishes and wipes, but not all stores carry them.

HARDWARE AND HOOPS

Softly scrub any chrome pieces, including cymbal stands, with steel wool or a Brillo pad. Do not attempt this on brass, black nickel, or any specialty finish other than chrome. Do a test on a small portion of each piece before scrubbing too hard. You can't undo scratches, but the steel wool will remove any rust or grime that has set into the metal. Be sure to get the inside of the hoops as well. You should spend about two or three minutes per hoop and focus an extra forty-five seconds on any heavily rusted areas. For particularly troublesome spots, wipe them down with Windex or WD-40 first, to help protect them, and then try scrubbing again. In my experience, commercial-grade chrome cleaners don't add, or take away, shine on the rims and hoops.

REASSEMBLY

When putting the inserts and springs back inside the lugs, place half a cotton ball inside each lug as well. This quiets any rattling noises that can occur with some types of lugs. Screw the lugs back onto the shells, and you're almost done!

If you've had trouble with lug screws coming loose over time and falling inside the drum, you can secure them with plumber's tape or Loctite, or you can try switching out the lugs and screws in that location. You may have a stripped screw or a loose-fitting lug. Sometimes adding a cardboard washer helps absorb some of the vibrations and keeps the screws tight.

MUFFLING

As you reassemble your kit, remove any type of tape or muffling from your drums and heads, with the exception of the kick drum pillow, if you use one. Reapply the heads and hoops. Whenever you do a thorough cleaning, you should start fresh, adding back muffling as you need it. Muffling is often used inappropriately to compensate for rattling noises. Instead of just taping up a noisy drum, investigate the cause of the rattle.

RESONANT HEADS

This is also a good time to evaluate how old your bottom heads are. They usually lose tone after a year of use but are often overlooked. If you're still using the stock heads that came with the kit, you'll be amazed at the transformation in sound you can achieve by switching these often inferi-or-quality models for a good set. Simply changing the resonant heads can add the power and tone you've been looking to achieve.

THE BIG FINISH

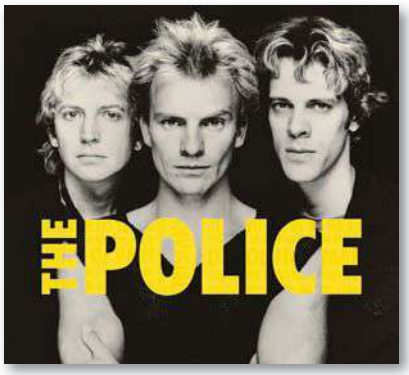
Make sure to spray some Pledge on the front bass drum head. This is the very first thing your audience sees, and first impressions are crucial. You may want to test a small portion of the cleaner on your logo first, just to make sure it doesn't fade or crack the material. Should you want to remove the manufacturer's logo from the drumhead, try applying acetone liberally, immediately wiping it away with a towel. Make sure to do this outdoors and away from flames.

Now that your kit has been cleaned and reassembled, take a few steps back and look for anything that stands out. Be your own worst critic. That way, if the drums look good to you, they will look amazing to your audience. This annual maintenance program will go a long way in prolonging the life of your kit.

Get the Best

by Ilya Stemkovsky

Compilation albums that really pack a punch—plus further must-have tracks.
This month: Punky new-wave groups featuring iconic drummers…and a couple Playboy Bunnies.



THE POLICE *The Police*

Sequenced chronologically and covering five albums made in just five years, this double-disc comp allows you to hear not only vocalist/bassist Sting's evolving and maturing songwriting but also the development of the unique and influential drumming voice that made **STEWART COPELAND** a legend. Early tracks like "Roxanne" and "So Lonely" (from 1978's debut, *Outlandos d'Amour*) spotlight the group's new-wave punk aesthetic and Copeland's signature rock-meets-reggae kit work, while the simple but effective bass drum backbeat on "Bring On the Night (from 1979's *Reggatta de Blanc*) shows how the drummer could play uncluttered patterns that moved the music brilliantly, and right up the charts. Copeland is *the man* when it comes to interesting hi-hat work, so check out his combo Octoban and hat fills in the chorus of "Driven to Tears" and the steppers stomp during the verses of "De Do Do Do, De Da Da Da" and "Don't Stand So Close to Me" (all from 1980's *Zenyatta Mondatta*). By 1981's *Ghost in the Machine*, keyboards and horns had entered the mix, though Copeland is still unruly on the propulsive "Demolition Man," alongside megahits like "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic" (dig the verses featuring cool delay on the drums). *Synchronicity*, from 1983, proved to be the band's swan song, though the spacious "Wrapped Around Your Finger" and metronomic "Every Breath You Take" show yet more facets of Copeland's drumming that would solidify his role as a reference point for future generations.

Amazon.com double CD (from 2007): $16.64*
iTunes full album download: $16.99

EXPAND THE PICTURE: At a healthy twenty-eight tracks, this collection is a great entry spot for those just discovering the band's oeuvre, but some key songs are absent. From iTunes, download *Reggatta de Blanc*'s "The Bed's Too Big Without You" for Copeland's chugging rimclick doubles, and check out *Zenyatta Mondatta*'s head-bobbing "When the World Is Running Down…" to hear the drummer at his tightest. Then grab just about anything from *The Police Live!*, featuring beautifully recorded concerts from 1979 and 1983, with Copeland letting loose on stage.

BLONDIE *Greatest Hits*

Fronted by former Playboy Bunny Debbie Harry and featuring catchy choruses and infectious hooks, Blondie was one of the more palatable of the new-wave bands to emerge from the New York City underground scene of the mid-1970s. But the group's eclectic style was not easily pigeonholed, as this compilation proves. Drummer **CLEM BURKE** brings focused, straightforward rock drumming to early songs like "Rip Her to Shreds" (from 1976's debut, *Blondie*) and, later, a manic energy to tracks like "(I'm Always Touched by Your) Presence, Dear" (from 1978's *Plastic Letters*) and "Dreaming" (from 1979's *Eat to the Beat*), peppering them with rolling snare and tom fills and a big dose of attitude. Ubiquitous on the radio, "Call Me" (from 1980's *American Gigolo* soundtrack) is a Burke tour-de-force, complete with a driving shuffle-esque feel and syncopated hi-hat punctuations. The band was not averse to incorporating elements of the booming disco scene of the time, and Burke's no-nonsense dance-floor beats on radio staples like "Heart of Glass" (from 1978's *Parallel Lines*) as well as deeper album cuts like "The Hardest Part" (*Eat to the Beat*) prove that less is definitely more in the club. *Autoamerican*, from 1980, is represented by the funk/rap hybrid of "Rapture" and the calypso flavors of "The Tide Is High," both smash hits released shortly before Blondie ran out of gas.

Amazon.com CD (from 2002): $10.87*
iTunes full album download: $11.99

EXPAND THE PICTURE: *Parallel Lines* might be Blondie's most popular and accomplished record, and besides the aforementioned "Heart of Glass" it includes excellent Burke work on "One Way or Another," "Picture This," "Sunday Girl," and "Hanging on the Telephone," all included on *Greatest Hits*, so cherry pick more from the record by downloading from iTunes "I'm Gonna Love You Too" for some '50s-style, double-backbeat rock 'n' roll drumming that hits the spot. And for some of Burke's most daring, off-the-wall fills, pull "No Imagination," from *Plastic Letters*.

MISSING PERSONS *The Best of Missing Persons*

Sure, the press focused on singer Dale Bozzio's vocal limitations and what she *wasn't* wearing (like Blondie's chanteuse, she was also a former Playboy Bunny), but real music fans quickly took notice of Missing Persons the band, which just happened to be made up of some killer former Frank Zappa associates, like drummer **TERRY BOZZIO**. Culled from only three albums and an EP, *The Best* is a great one-stop shop for truly inventive Bozzio performances, including the razor-sharp "Words" (from 1982's *Spring Session M*), a song boasting one of the greatest drum sounds *ever*, and "I Like Boys" (from 1980's *Missing Persons* EP), featuring offbeat ride bell accents, a wicked syncopated snare pattern, rapid-fire tom fills, and those spicy flams that were all his own. Bozzio is a clock on the minor hits "Destination Unknown" and "Walking in L.A." (both from *Spring Session M*) and is in full-on electronic mode on "Give" and "Right Now" (from 1984's *Rhyme & Reason*). The synth-pop flavors on 1986's *Color in Your Life* are geared more toward the discotheque, but check out the arresting gated-tom breaks on "No Secrets" for a reminder that the drummer was still coming to play. The Zappa faithful might have cried foul, but closer inspection reveals that Missing Persons was the perfect vehicle for the next craft-centered phase in Bozzio's illustrious career.

Amazon.com CD (from 1990): $9.99*
iTunes full album download: $9.99

EXPAND THE PICTURE: Gather up more tracks from *Spring Session M* on iTunes. Check out "U.S. Drag" to hear one head-scratcher of a groove, and continue with the rocking "Noticeable One" and the fleet-footed "Here and Now" for more prime Bozzio—big beats, big tom fills, and, as you can imagine, big hair.

** Online prices tend to fluctuate.*

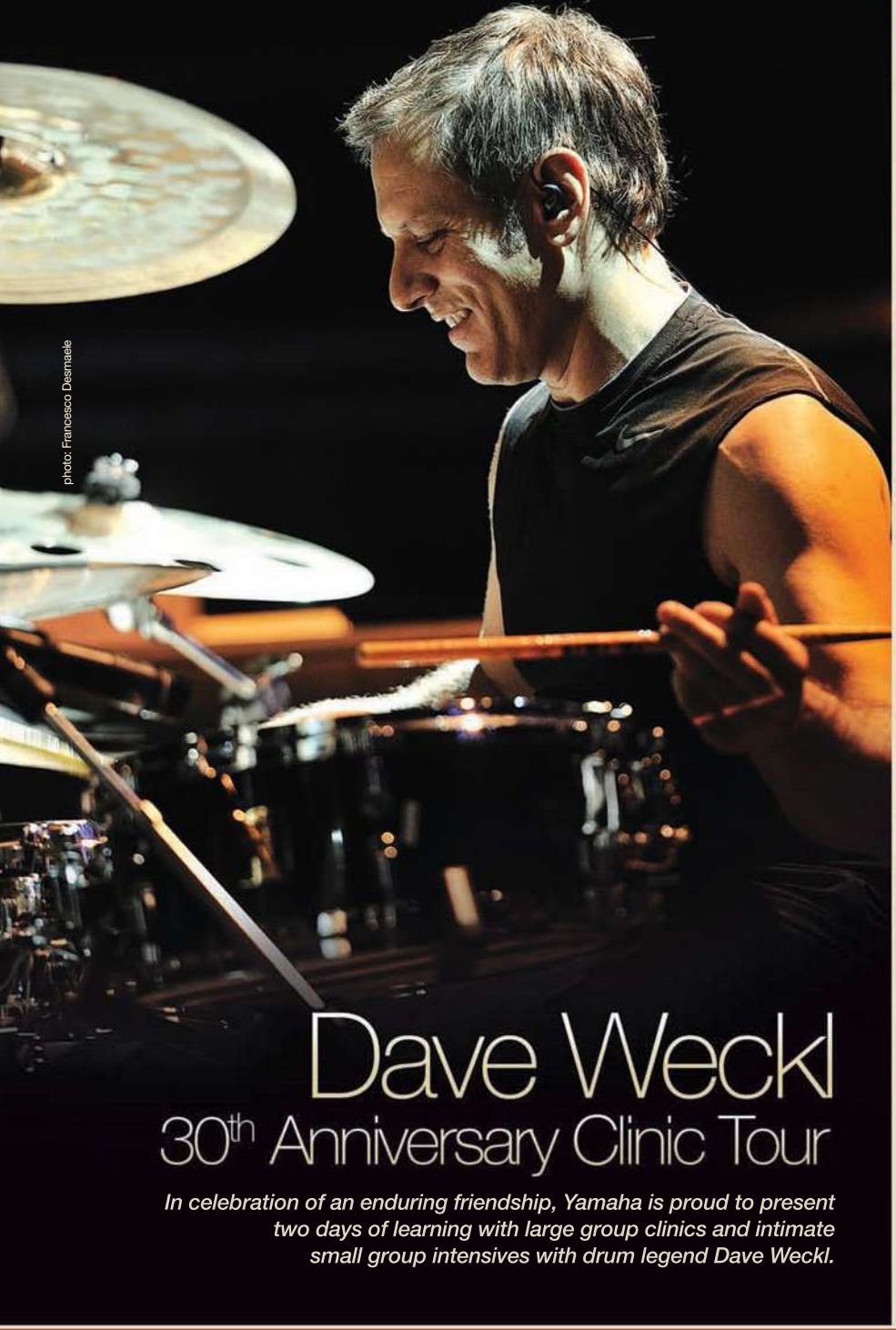


photo: Francesco Desmaele

Dave Weckl
30th Anniversary Clinic Tour

In celebration of an enduring friendship, Yamaha is proud to present two days of learning with large group clinics and intimate small group intensives with drum legend Dave Weckl.

In a career spanning more than four decades, Dave Weckl has built a reputation of integrity, creativity, and innovation. That reputation extends across the music industry – to musicians and music fans worldwide.

Yamaha invites you to join us in celebrating 30 years of uncompromising collaboration with Dave. Beginning in November, we will bring the first U.S. leg of Dave's international clinic tour to the Midwest. Each stop will feature Dave's two-day educational program including a large group clinic (open to the public) on Day One and an intimate drumming intensive limited to 20 participants on Day Two. Both programs feature Dave performing and teaching on the new Yamaha Live Custom Series drums.

For clinic information and to register for the small group intensives, please visit **www.DaveWeckl.com.** Additional dates and locations will be announced.

Clinic Dates

11/6/13	6:00PM	Memphis Drum Shop	Memphis, TN
11/8/13	6:00PM	Guitar Center	Nashville, TN
11/11/13	6:00PM	Guitar Center	Louisville, KY
11/13/13	7:00PM	Sweetwater Sound	Fort Wayne, IN
11/16/13	3:00PM	PASIC - Clinic	Indianapolis, IN
11/16/13	8:15PM	PASIC - Concert	Indianapolis, IN
11/18/13	6:00PM	Guitar Center	Country Club Hills, IL
11/20/13	6:00PM	Guitar Center	Madison, WI
11/22/13	6:00PM	Cascio Interstate Music	New Berlin, WI

One-Day Intensive Dates*

11/7/13	9:00AM	Memphis Drum Shop	Memphis, TN
11/9/13	9:00AM	*to be announced*	Nashville, TN
11/12/13	9:00AM	*to be announced*	Louisville, KY
11/14/13	9:00AM	Sweetwater Sound	Fort Wayne, IN
11/19/13	9:00AM	Vic's Drum Shop	Chicago, IL
11/21/13	9:00AM	*to be announced*	Madison, WI
11/23/13	9:00AM	Cascio Interstate Music	New Berlin, WI

Please contact Steve Orkin at **questions@daveweckl.com to register*

YAMAHA

For Live Custom info, please visit **4wrd.it/LCDWMD2**

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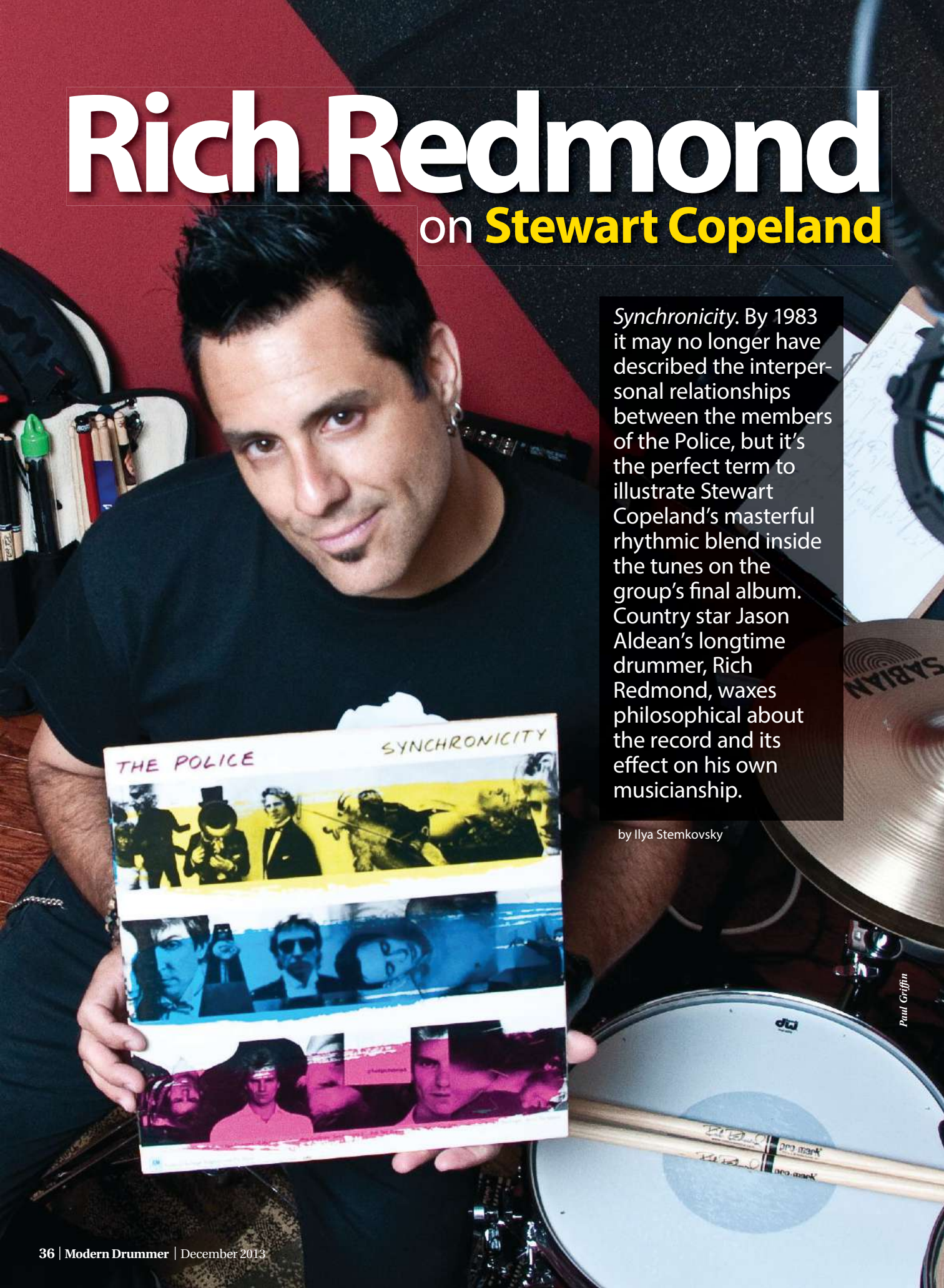
Rich Redmond on Stewart Copeland

Synchronicity. By 1983 it may no longer have described the interpersonal relationships between the members of the Police, but it's the perfect term to illustrate Stewart Copeland's masterful rhythmic blend inside the tunes on the group's final album. Country star Jason Aldean's longtime drummer, Rich Redmond, waxes philosophical about the record and its effect on his own musicianship.

by Ilya Stemkovsky



Paul Griffin

MD: How did you discover *Synchronicity*?
Rich: Stewart Copeland was my dude growing up. I'm classically trained, but I really learned how to play the drums watching MTV, when they used to show actual concerts! And all the VJs would be talking about *Synchronicity*. I went to school with a Police concert T-shirt, and I had *The Police Live at the Omni* on VHS and studied it over and over. *Synchronicity* and Alex Van Halen on Van Halen's *1984* were my two gateway drugs. I thought, *I don't know what this is, or what this feeling is, but this is what I want to do for the rest of my life.*
MD: What made Stewart your dude?
Rich: His style was completely unique. Words that come to mind about Stewart are *fire*, *energy*, *commitment*, *conviction*, and the way he combines power and finesse. He was a traveling kid, and you can hear the Caribbean, African, South American, and Middle Eastern influences, and of course the punk drumming. Stewart had the high-pitched snare drum and the 8" tom, which I thought was a killer voice. His style on the hi-hat was constantly percolating. His hats were open, half-open, closed—and there were ruffs and drags and five-stroke and seven-stroke rolls.

I don't even know if Stewart consciously knew he was doing those things. But I was in marching band in high school, and I realized these were a direct musical application of rudiments. I was a nerdy research kid. I'd play along with the records, but I'd also transcribe, which was good for my reading skills and came into play later in my career.

Another thing I stole was the way Stewart would dance all over the ride cymbal. He played with the tip of the stick, the shank of the stick, on the bell, on the body, on the edge, like he was a swashbuckler just jousting on the ride. Not only was it beautiful to watch, but it sounded like there was a randomness to it, kind of Latin, and I use that every day in the studio. I've become very pattern oriented on the things I play on—boom-smack, boom-boom-smack. Those kinds of things are really static. So I'll apply that concept I stole from Stewart and use the variety of sounds on the ride cymbal to create interest during a chorus or solo or bridge. It creates an attitude and a color.
MD: Are there any other Stewart-isms that you incorporate into your playing?
Rich: Crossing patterns. Many drummers are judged by the quality and consistency of their cross-stick. Especially in Nashville, you have to have a beautiful, singing quality to your cross-stick. Little did I know that by playing cross-stick polyrhythms along to Stewart's records, I was actually working on a skill set, a sound I would go on to use all the time. He came into my life for a reason. The way he approached the drumset was completely musical, and I stole all of it. [laughs]
MD: What's your take on specific album tracks?
Rich: "Synchronicity I"—it was so smooth and musical, you didn't even know it was in 6/4 time. To me that's the mark of a great song and a great musician. And in "Synchronicity II" he overdubs that choked cymbal—it's a percussive melody. It takes a brilliant musician to make a choked cymbal have a melodic quality to it. And in "Miss Gradenko," he'd play a one-drop but had an Octoban or a high-pitched tom play on beat 1. And his fills would be these South American–inspired, timbale-style licks.

"Every Breath You Take" was their straight-ahead, number-one pop song, the most simple I'd ever heard Stewart play. I tell my students that popular music comes down to five "money beats," and Stewart was playing money beat number two. That was totally foreshadowing a beat I've played on a million Aldean songs and every day in Nashville studios.

On "Wrapped Around Your Finger," there's the interaction between the high tom, the hi-hat, and the splash cymbal, which is gorgeous—just poetry in motion. And on "Murder by Numbers" [not on the original LP, but added to subsequent issues] there are eight bars of drums out front by themselves, in 12/8 time. And when you're thirteen years old, you can't find where the 1 is on a beat like that—12/8, bass drum on 2 and 4, with a cross-stick on the in-between partials of the triplets—like an inverted quarter-note triplet.

For me, playing country music and roots music, one of the things you have to learn is how to play straight rhythms and swung rhythms and how to play in between. And "Tea in the Sahara" is like that. It's not straight, it's not a shuffle—they can't decide what it is, it's just a feeling. And it's kind of New Orleans–y with jazz and R&B, and only Stewart can play it like that. He showed that you can fuse so many influences together and have it still make sense. Whether you're in a band or you're a session musician or a touring sideman, one of the goals that everyone has in their career is to have a unique, identifiable voice. Stewart achieved that early on, and maybe *Synchronicity* was his Mona Lisa.

Sparks' Tammy Glover

Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by Alex Solca

Few musicians have the opportunity to enjoy simultaneous—and significant—careers on stage and in the conference room. Here the veteran drummer with the iconic cult band Sparks connects the dots between the two vastly different worlds.

By day, Tammy Glover is a mild-mannered senior vice president of production with FremantleMedia, the talent conglomerate that has produced such reality-TV shows as *American Idol*, *America's Got Talent*, and *The X Factor*. But by night she trades in her BlackBerry for drumsticks. Playing for the esteemed, idiosyncratic rock band Sparks and for her own retro-rocking outfit, Thorcraft Cobra, Glover sends a titanic rhythmic message that is both sludgy and solid. Sorry, Hal Blaine, but Tammy Glover is today's one-woman wrecking crew, possessing the kind of rhythmic and music-business knowledge that makes her the envy of budding rock stars and MBAs alike.

Since joining Sparks on the road in support of its 1997 album, *Plagiarism*, Glover has recorded *Balls* (2000), *Lil' Beethoven* (2002), *Hello Young Lovers* (2006), *Exotic Creatures of the Deep* (2008), and *The Seduction of Ingmar Bergman* (2009). Tammy approaches her job with brothers Ron and Russell Mael as the first-class touring opportunity it is, performing at posh venues worldwide and soaking in the international sun.

Conversely, Thorcraft Cobra, Glover's raging rock furnace with band partner Billy Zimmer, is where she gets her hands dirty, slapping tubs like some punk raised on the Ramones, Ringo, and Tony Thompson. *Count It In*, the group's debut recording, is as far from television's halls of commerce as Beijing is from Bollywood, but it's all in a day's (or night's) work for Tammy Glover.

MD: How does your drumming differ between Sparks and Thorcraft Cobra?
Tammy: Ron and Russell have a unique process. As people they are very quirky and eccentric. Everything is highly demoed, and I come in and play exactly what they want me to play. They have a vision for the music. Everything is very symphonic and operatic, so I have parts that come in and fly out. And the parts have evolved since I began playing with them in 1996. We've done straight-ahead pop songs, and more recently they've been experimenting with form, with different kinds of sonic possibilities that tell pop songs in a different way. A lot of that is about repetition. To achieve it, they'll have a specific number of bars in a section that will repeat.

For instance, "My Baby's Taking Me Home" [from *Lil' Beethoven*] builds and builds, and the refrain becomes something different as it goes on. An outro with Sparks might last sixty-four bars, and it's all very specific. Every instrument is part of

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that batter being made into the mix of that particular song.

MD: How do you keep track of all these parts?

Tammy: They teach it to me, or they'll use loops. Then I'll play a Roland V-Drums kit. That lets them change and replace the sounds. Also, sometimes within an arrangement they will drop or add beats in some bars. They might throw in a bar of 3/4 or 2/4 within a really repetitive pattern. Or 4/4 will turn into a bar of 5/4 and then back to 4/4. That keeps people on their toes.

MD: Do you play V-Drums live?

Tammy: I have, but I don't like to. I prefer an acoustic kit in the live environment. Sparks' body of work is very stylized. A few years ago we re-created [the group's classic 1974 album] *Kimono My House* at Royal Festival Hall. None of the drum sounds on that record could have been created with the V-Drums—it's a very bashy, acoustic album. So we did everything with the acoustic kit. Dinky Diamond set the template for all of that iconic '70s Sparks material—really cool drum fills. I enjoyed learning all his parts. And they influence what I record with them now.

MD: And what is your recording process with Thorcraft Cobra?

Tammy: It's like a normal band! Things start with a guitar riff, then Billy comes up with some ideas and we experiment. We record drums, then layer parts after that.

MD: You play behind the beat. How do you approach the click?

Tammy: Playing with Sparks taught me how to play with a click. I was uncomfortable with the click before joining them, but everything is so sequenced that I had to make it work. My dad, Howie Glover, is a drummer, so I've been playing my whole life. He's an amazing drummer who played in a lot of country-and-western bands—Lefty Frizzell was probably his biggest gig—and setting the foundation for a song was his thing. That translates to my sitting behind the click and being really comfortable with it; basically that comes from experience. I was a marching-band geek and in the jazz band at school. I studied from one of Roy Burns' books and learned all my rudiments.

MD: Why did Sparks hire you?

Tammy: They heard me with my earlier band, Chewy Marble, and asked me to audition. I played three of their iconic songs at the audition. I didn't think I got the gig, because I didn't hear from them for a while. Then they called me to play a festival in Paris. I went from playing L.A. club gigs to performing in front of 10,000 people.

MD: You were vice president of production with Comedy Central from 2007 to 2011; now you're senior VP of production with FremantleMedia. You have rare insight into the music and entertainment business. Do you forget all that when you play with Thorcraft Cobra? Surely your business experience helps with starting a new band.

Tammy: No, it really doesn't. I still think of the music business as mercurial and hard to penetrate. If anything, I'm really cognizant of the boundaries of my job versus my drumming.

MD: Why?

Tammy: Because it impairs my credibility in both jobs to be promoting one in the world of the other.

MD: But to have your knowledge would be invaluable to the success of any young band, wouldn't it? Or do you just enjoy being in a rock band?

Tammy: Yep, I completely embrace that. When I was at Comedy Central I became friends with one of the music supervisors. She was doing TV pilots, and she placed Thorcraft Cobra music in a ton of them. Then when I was negotiating my deal for Fremantle, her brother was working in a show called *Wedding Band*. When I came to Fremantle, I had to immerse myself in that pilot, and it

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contained Thorcraft Cobra music. I immediately had it replaced to avoid conflict of interest. So I am hypersensitive to not promote anything I do in my shows. If I had an agenda, I would lose credibility.

MD: The club rats out there would have questions for you about the industry, though—something as simple as, "How do I make my band more attractive to a label or to the media?" You understand better than most how the industry works. Any gigging musician would love to bend your ear.

Tammy: I don't apply that to my situation, but I can answer those questions. First of all, as a gigging drummer, you must have publishing. If you are in a band, you can't be a work-for-hire musician; you need to be part of the songwriting process. And in every way. You need to understand technology, you need to understand how publishing works, you need to know what "source cue" means—music that is literally *in* the movie or TV scene, as opposed to the score. You have to know how to "spot" music—the process that directors use to determine where music occurs with the visuals. All that can make you an invaluable part of the team.

I do think there are more and more opportunities to use legitimate songs in TV and film; ten years ago there was a much bigger emphasis on composed music and library music. Now popular music seeps into everything, and there is a much bigger market for real musicians and real bands to have their songs placed as source music. That's like the lottery. The more times at bat you have, the more opportunity you'll have to click with an audience and break out. That began in television shows like *Gossip Girl*. Now with reality and cable television, to place music in those shows is a legitimate way to have a hit.

MD: Does an artist need a manager to place songs?

Tammy: No, it's about getting your music to a music supervisor; they choose the tracks that go in a show or film. Drummers, with our knowledge of pacing and feel and rhythm, make amazing music editors. It's a great transitional job for a drummer, in the same way that drummers can program and create tracks to be used in multiple scenarios. It's the same skill set.

MD: How do you balance band duties with your day job?

Tammy: I take vacations. I also have a family that I'm devoted to. I've been lucky to see the world with Sparks. It's great to go to a city and all I have to do is play a show. I'm a ringer in Sparks, so when we tour nobody really wants to talk to me! But the idea that I could have a parallel career has been great. It looks like it was by design, but it was absolutely not. It's truly been amazing.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

"I basically play three kits," Glover says. "One is a 1953 Gretsch red sparkle set that belonged to my dad. It originally came with a 22" kick, a 14" snare, a 13" rack tom, and a 16" floor tom. In the '60s my dad added a second rack tom. He played these drums through the '80s, and I inherited them after he retired.

"My Roland V-Drums kit that I use to record with Sparks has a TD-10 percussion module with a TDW-1 expansion board. I use the mesh V-Pad PDX-100 drums with CY-14C V-Cymbals, but I cannibalized my old PD-7 kit and still use one of the pads for my hi-hat and an old 18" Pintech TC series electronic cymbal as a ride. With that kit, I use the Roland KD-120 V-Kick trigger pad and snare pad as well.

"My third kit is a birch Yamaha Stage Custom with a deep-blue finish for playing live. It has a 20" kick, 10" and 12" toms, and a 14" floor tom. I have a 6x14 chrome Supra-Phonic Ludwig snare that I use with that kit. Years ago I found a retro round hat case that fits the snare perfectly, so I travel with it in that.

"My Zildjian cymbals, which I also inherited from my father, include 14" Mastersound hi-hats, a 16" crash, and two hand-hammered 'trans stamp' cymbals—a 20" crash and a 22" ride. They are the sweetest cymbals I've ever heard and are instantly recognizable on any recording.

"My electronics include an ancient Mackie Micro twelve-channel mixer, Vic Firth headphones, and, live, custom Future Sonics in-ears."

Glover's drumheads include Remo Coated Ambassador tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, a Coated Ambassador snare batter and Diplomat bottom, and a Coated Ambassador bass drum batter and Yamaha logo front head. On her Gretsch bass drum she uses a Remo Fiberskyn, because, she says, "it has such a cool, warm sound."

Tammy uses Vic Firth Extreme 5A drumsticks with Vic Grip, and a DW 5000 bass drum pedal.

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George "Spanky" McCurdy

Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by Alex Solca

LADY GAGA'S LEAN, MEAN DISPLACEMENT MACHINE

His infamous "off time" approach has been the source of many a drummer's woodshed frustrations. An eye-opening DVD now offers insight. But, as with so many players who live on the front lines of innovation, true understanding becomes clear only when you trace the origins of his art.

Every so often a drummer arrives who changes our conception of what we knew and what we know. Though he's been a fixture on the scene for over ten years, with such artists as Kanye West, P. Diddy, Jill Scott, and currently Lady Gaga, not until recently has thirty-two-year-old George "Spanky" McCurdy detailed his methodology to the drumming masses, with his highly anticipated Hudson DVD, *Off Time/On Time*.

McCurdy groomed his groove playing in his father's Philadelphia church, and then when barely twenty he graduated to the big leagues with gospel star Tye Tribbett. Inspired by his close friends Lil' John Roberts and Brian Frasier-Moore, the upstart was soon knocking down doors, touring and recording with everyone from Queen Latifah, Timbaland, Justin Timberlake, and Q-Tip to Bubba Sparxxx, Nas, and Brandy. Since 2002 his powerful groove, silky touch, and perfect meter have landed him session work on dozens of albums—and the steam continues to rise off Spanky's Tama kit.

Far from a faceless meter machine or a flailing, chops-spewing speed demon, McCurdy is a thoughtful, inventive musician. Well versed in the basics after years of rudimental and orchestral study, the drummer found his own wrinkle to explore. Basing his "off time" concept to some degree on such programmers as J Dilla, who have forever changed the way we hear and perceive rhythm, McCurdy expresses beat displacement as something raw, joyful, and occasionally as mystifying as space aliens and the origin of the species.

Off Time/On Time features Spanky performing his new groove style to sequenced tracks that range from

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Elektric Band fusion to space-age funk and R&B. He starts off simply enough, focusing on beat 1 of each bar, then quickly flies into off-time hyperspace, performing razor-clean rolls, nearly freakish independence, and across-the-barline 8th-, 16th-, and 32nd-note triplets, deftly moving accents between each note of the phrase, all while grooving hard. Spanky speaks to off-time playing with the conviction of a minister (he is in fact a church deacon), while also treating viewers to his subversion of classic rudiments, including his "partial diddle." Playing what's basically a one-sided paradiddle, he maneuvers the sticking with such speed and grace that the line between single stroke and double stroke is quickly blurred.

Excellent transcriptions help explain the method to Spanky's madness, but a hundred questions remain. Catching up with the busy drummer during a recent Lady Gaga tour, *MD* seeks to pin down the man whose upcoming CD, *Spank Sinatra*, may do for displacement what the legendary jazz vocalist did for standards, cabaret songs, and highballs.

"The first time I heard Chris Dave I was blown away. The things he did…I understood everything. Before that I felt like an alien."

MD: When were you hired for the Lady Gaga chair?

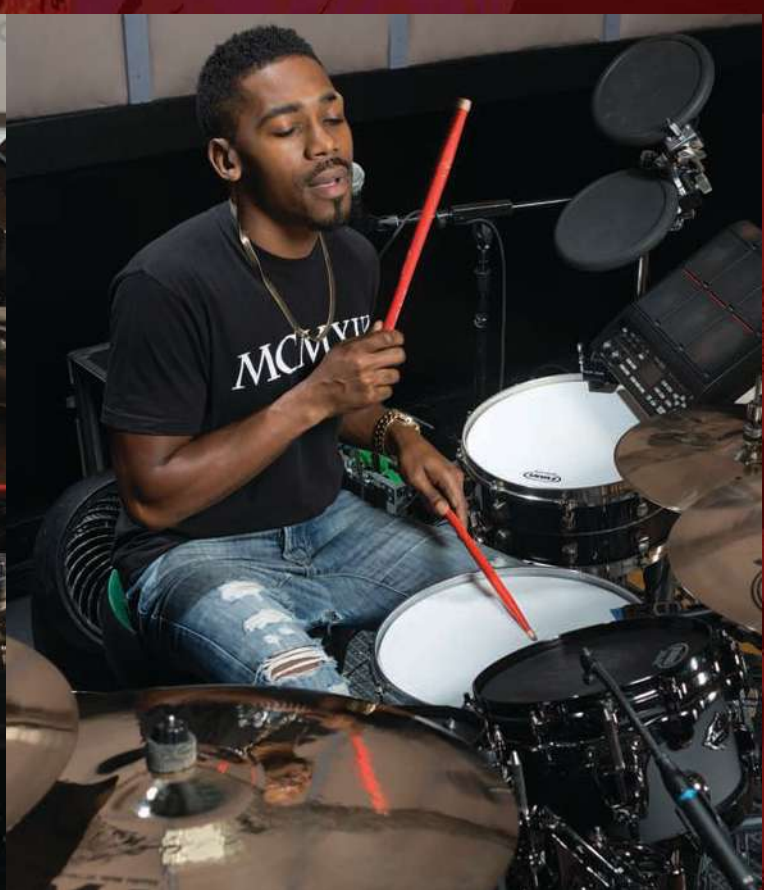
Spanky: I was hired in 2009, right after my father passed away. We buried him in October, then the auditions happened a month later. My mindset was to get back to work after having to leave a tour with Maxwell. I got through the Gaga auditions and got a call to play. She went crazy happy during my audition, and the next thing I know I'm on the road and never coming home! I had never been involved with a major pop artist. Everything changes. But it's really like a home atmosphere, like a squad, like a *band*. It's been four years already.

MD: Was working with a pop act like Lady Gaga a hard shift from playing with an R&B artist like Maxwell?

Spanky: I'd worked with Backstreet Boys, Queen Latifah, and other pop gigs, so I really was ready for anything.

MD: What was the audition process?

Spanky: There were hundreds of drummers. They lined us up. You had to freestyle a little bit, then play to her song "Paparazzi." I played a little of a song I used to play with N.E.R.D., "Everyone Nose." It's a nice groove. I didn't know what else to do, but they noticed the song. That groove was cool, then I went into "Paparazzi." I was nervous because I'm not an auditioning drummer. It's not the most comfortable situation. I don't know how people do *American Idol* or *America's Got Talent*. I wasn't nervous when it came to the other drummers, but just the whole



thing. It was fun, though.

MD: Did Lady Gaga participate?

Spanky: Lady Gaga came in later, during the final cuts. She had her eyes closed while I was playing, listening. I did something at the end and she said, "I really like that!" I told her my name and she said, "I know who you are." It was like a scene in a movie. It was pretty dope.

MD: Who influenced your off-time style of playing?

Spanky: I would always practice and get these ideas for off-time stuff, things I never heard anybody else do. There wasn't a particular source for inspiration. I would always joke around with it, and my friends would laugh. "You're crazy! Go back to the 1!" Then with Tye Tribbett and the band, they understood everything, and once I incorporated it into my playing, it was amazing. *This is not a joke—this is serious*, I thought. The only drummer I knew then who did it was Deantoni Parks from KUDU. He's great. And of course, Chris Dave is abstract. The first time I heard him I was blown away. The things he did…I understood everything. Before that I felt like an alien—then I heard Chris and I thought, *There's more of us?* I just had these weird ideas with all this crazy off-time, abstract stuff. I was happy to see Chris Dave, a supreme legend, really going that route.

MD: Had you heard Dave Weckl's style of displacement?

Spanky: Oh, yeah. He's super-clean. You take a little from each drummer. That's what your ears do. Dave Weckl is super-finesse, and I love how he plays his cymbals.

MD: There are many concepts in your DVD. On the song "Silk," for example, you play snare drags, snare drum and hi-hat combinations, and broken 8th- and 16th-note triplets around the kit, often over the barline. What advice can you give to generally understand your off-time approach and not be overwhelmed by the complexity of the concept?

Spanky: Don't take what I am doing verbatim. In my DVD I'm showing different avenues—or bridges, I call them. I might do something little, like the echo system. It's something you can do, but it's not exactly what I do. You can place it anywhere. Most of the things I'm showing, I want drummers to be able to do them anywhere, to have different avenues to create more exciting things. So it's not verbatim playing; it's taking little bits of what I do. Like when you see a gymnast running to do a somersault but he has to hit the springboard first, I'm offering springboards—little grooves and exercises that can add to what you already do. But if drummers want to learn everything verbatim, it might be a lot.

MD: How do you play broken 8th- and

RECORDINGS

Justin Timberlake Justified /// **Bubba Sparxxx** Deliverance /// **Tye Tribbett & G.A.** Stand Out, Life, Victory Live /// **Men of Standard** Surrounded //// **Jill Scott** Beautifully Human: Words and Sounds Vol. 2, The Real Thing: Words and Sounds Vol. 3 /// **Vikter Duplaix** Bold and Beautiful /// **various artists** The Very Best of Praise and Worship

Vol. 2 /// **Musiq Soulchild** Luvanmusiq /// **various artists** Songs 4 Worship: Friend of God /// **Lady Gaga** Born This Way: The Collection /// **George "Spanky" McCurdy** Off Time/On Time (DVD)

INFLUENCES

Tony Moore & Jehovah's Chosen Love Lifted Me (Lil' John Roberts) /// **Steve Middleton** Praises From the Soul (Brian Frasier-Moore) /// **Meshell Ndegeocello** Comfort Woman (Chris Dave), The Spirit Music Jamia: Dance of the Infidel (Chris Dave, Jack DeJohnette, Gene Lake) /// **The Roots** The Tipping Point (Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson) /// **Slum Village** Fan-Tas-Tic Vol. 1 (J Dilla, programming)

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- 10x8 and 12x9" rack toms, 16x14" floor tom, 22x18" bass drum and a free 8x7" rack tom
- 100% maple lacquer shells with Gretsch GTS suspension system
- Your choice of exclusive ebony black or satin walnut finish

HARDWARE, CYMBALS, SNARE, PERCUSSION AND ELECTRONICS SOLD SEPARATELY
COLORS VARY BY LOCATION
SELECT STORES
(RNE824PT6-TEL) (RNE824PT6-SWB)
LIST: $2614.99

YOUR CHOICE AFTER $399 INSTANT REBATE
$999.97
SAVE $1615 OFF LIST

FREE

14" GRETSCH RENOWN SNARE WITH RENOWN KIT PURCHASE – A $300 VALUE (RN6514S-CRM)

GRETSCH ENERGY 5-PIECE COMPLETE KIT WITH HARDWARE AND SABIAN CYMBALS

BEST SELLER

- 14x5.5" snare, 22x18" bass drum, 10x7 and 12x8" rack toms, plus a 16x14" floor tom
- Sabian SBR cymbal pack with hi-hats, crash and ride included
- Kick pedal, and double-braced hardware included
- Non-drilled bass drum for solid, low-end punch

PERCUSSION SOLD SEPARATELY
COLORS VARY BY LOCATION
(GEE8256PKGST)
(GEE8256PKBLK)
(GEXE825VPRED)
LIST: $1080.00

YOUR CHOICE
$699.99
SAVE $380 OFF LIST

SET UP YOUR KIT FASTER AND MORE CONSISTENTLY

- 46" curved rack bar for natural feel
- 2 cymbal boom arms and 8 total clamps
- Memory lock system for consistent setup
- Infinitely adjustable clamp arrangement

(GRSP-CW) LIST: $750.00

$349.99
SAVE 53% OFF LIST

FREE

LEGLESS SNARE STAND WITH RACK PURCHASE – A $109 VALUE REDEEMABLE BY MAIL (9506NL)

GRETSCH 14x6.5" TAYLOR HAWKINS SIGNATURE SNARE DRUM

- 14x6.5'' steel shell that plated with gleaming black nickel
- 2.3mm triple-flanged hoops, 10 lugs and adjustable throw-off
- 20-strand snare wires, Remo drum heads
- Signature Taylor Hawkins badge with "The Hawk" symbol

(S6514TH) LIST: $385.99

$249.99
SAVE $136 OFF LIST

GIBRALTAR LIGHTNING ROD TELESCOPING HI-HAT STAND

- Designed for ease of setup, adjustability and breakdown
- Great for quick setup and tear down and also offers infinite adjustments
- Adjusts to very low playing height settings and allows the hi-hat pull rod to telescope down to match the setting
- Lightweight and portable

(GLRHH-SB) LIST: $185.00

$119.99
SAVE $65 OFF LIST

TOCA SYNERGY CONGA SET IN AN EXCLUSIVE BLACK LACQUER FINISH

$50 INSTANT REBATE

- Lathed and handcrafted in Thailand by local musicians
- Harvested wood is low-impact to be as environmentally friendly as possible
- 28" tall, two-ply wood shell construction in an exclusive ebony lacquer finish
- Black powder-coated hardware, double-braced stand

(2300TB) LIST: $404.00

AFTER $50 INSTANT REBATE

$199.99

SAVE 50% OFF LIST

ADD THE MATCHING BONGOS FOR $49.99 (2100TB)

THE AMERICANA GROOVE CAJON FROM LP—HANDCRAFTED IN USA FROM HAND-SELECTED BALTIC BIRCH

- Hand-selected, 11-ply, plantation-grown Baltic birch
- Adjustable frontplate equipped with fixed snare wires
- Unique shape and construction delivers rich, deep bass tones
- Rubber feet prevent sliding and add stability while playing

(LP1427) LIST: $299.00

$189.99

SAVE $109 OFF LIST

TOCA FREESTYLE COLORSOUND DJEMBES

$5 INSTANT REBATE

- 7" goatskin head and authentic rope tuning
- Available in metallic indigo, metallic orange or white

COLORS VARY BY LOCATION
(TFCDJ-7LW) (TFCDJ-7MI) (TFCDJ-7MO)
LIST: $59.00

YOUR CHOICE AFTER $5 INSTANT REBATE

$29.99

SAVE 49% OFF LIST

GET THE CITY CONGA 10 & 11" SET IN VINTAGE SUNBURST OR EXCLUSIVE BLACK SATIN

NEW AT GUITAR CENTER

- 10 and 11" Siam oak shells
- Rawhide heads, rubber bottoms
- Black powder-coated hardware, 9/32" lugs
- Double stand included

SELECT STORES
(LP646NYVSB) (LP646NYBK)
LIST: $499.99

NEW

YOUR CHOICE

$299.99

SAVE 40% OFF LIST

BRIGHT AND CUTTING 24-BELL, HAND-HELD PERCUSSION SLEIGH BELLS

- This handheld percussion accessory invokes the spirit of the season like no other
- Well-made with quality wood and metal
- Designed to last and to sound fantastic every time

(CP374) LIST: $63.00

$33.99

SAVE 46% OFF LIST

COMFORT STARTS WITH A CAJON THRONE

NEW AT GUITAR CENTER

- Large, padded seat
- 360° rotation.

CAJON SOLD SEPARATELY
(LP1445) LIST: $29.99

NEW

$19.99

SAVE $10 OFF LIST

SABIAN

HUGE HOLIDAY SAVINGS ON SELECT SABIAN CYMBALS

$50 INSTANT REBATE

Select models: 14" HHX Evolution mini chinese, 17" AAX stage crash brilliant, 16" Paragon crash brilliant, 18" Paragon crash brilliant, 20" HHX Zen China brilliant, 21" HH raw bell dry ride brilliant

SELECTION VARIES BY LOCATION

(101960599) (105649685) (107631384) (105649651) (100152791) (100090702)

SEE STORE FOR PRICING

DESIGNED FOR LEGENDARY DRUMMER NEIL PEART, THE STEAMPUNK PARAGON 22" RIDE BOASTS A CLEAR, BRIGHT TONE

NEW AT GUITAR CENTER

- Extra-heavy ride cymbal (over 8 lb.) with large, solid bell
- Balances clear sticking with a bright tone
- Highly durable and effective in a wide range of applications
- Limited run of 300, hand-numbered with Certificate of Authenticity

SELECT STORES

WHILE SUPPLIES LAST

(NP2214BSP) LIST: $915.00

NEW

$549.99

SAVE $365 OFF LIST

XS20 BRILLIANT CYMBAL SET WITH FREE 18" MEDIUM-THIN CRASH

- Includes a pair of 14" Xs medium hi-hats, 16" Xs20 medium-thin crash, 20" Xs20 medium ride and a free a 18" medium-thin crash
- All cymbals feature Sabian's brilliant finish

SELECT STORES

(XS5005GB_134091) LIST: $799.00

$479.99

SAVE $319 OFF LIST

THIS SABIAN B8 CYMBAL PACK COMES WITH A FREE 16" B8 PRO O-ZONE CRASH

EXCLUSIVE

- Performance Set includes a 20" ride, 16" thin crash, 14" hi-hats and a free 16" O-Zone crash included in box

(45003-POZ) LIST: $555.00

PERFORMANCE SET +16

$299.99

SAVE 45% OFF LIST

FREE 18" CRASH INCLUDED WITH THE AAX X-PLOSION CYMBAL PREPACK

EXCLUSIVE

- Includes 14" AAX Stage hi-hats, 16" AAX X-plosion crash, 21" AAX Stage ride, plus a free 18" AAX X-plosion crash

SELECT STORES

(25005XXPGC-NB) LIST: $1405.00

$729.99

SAVE 48% OFF LIST

THE NEW VENICE SERIES FROM OCDP DELIVERS A GREAT-SOUNDING, AFFORDABLE PROFESSIONAL KIT

EXCLUSIVE

- 22x20" kick drum with 20 off-set lugs for precision tuning, 10x8 and 12x9" toms with suspension mounts for natural decay and resonance, 16x14" floor tom, and 14x6" snare
- 7.2mm 6-ply shells
- 45° bearing edges for sharp attack and natural resonance
- Available in earth tones Tuscan Red and Desert Sand

HARDWARE AND CYMBALS SOLD SEPARATELY
COLORS VARY BY LOCATION
(OCV5022-DSS)
(OCV5022-TCR)
LIST: $1299.99

NEW

YOUR CHOICE
$699.99
SAVE 46% OFF LIST

SDXPRESS 2 COMPACT 5-PIECE ELECTRONIC DRUM KIT

EXCLUSIVE

- Drum module with 10 pre-programmed drum kits, 193 individual drum sounds, 10 song styles, and song recorder
- 3 velocity-sensitive tom pads with integrated cross-bar
- 3 velocity-sensitive cymbal pads for hi-hat, crash, and ride
- Built-in hi-hat and kick drum pedals with drum-pedal action

(SDXPRESS2) LIST: $399.99

$249.99
SAVE $150 OFF LIST

THE SIMMONS SD1000 ELECTRONIC DRUM SET—FEATURING NEW SOUNDS AND KITS INSPIRED BY CLASSIC AND MODERN DRUM SETS

EXCLUSIVE

- 99 drum kits with 55 presets and 44 user kits
- 516 total drum voices
- Variable Attack Response combines increased sample ROM, intelligent sample triggering, and multiple velocity zones for natural dynamics and decay
- New multi-position hi-hat controller

(SD1000KIT) LIST: $999.99

$699.99
SAVE $300 OFF LIST

UPGRADE TO A TRIPLE-ZONE SNARE AND RIDE FOR JUST $169.99 WITH SD1000 KIT PURCHASE (S1000PAD11T) (S1000CYM14T) (S1000CAL) (SDRKCLP) (SDLARM)

THE SIMMONS SD5X—GREAT FEATURES AT AN INCREDIBLY LOW PRICE

EXCLUSIVE

- Compact, full-featured electronic drum set
- Includes 130 voices and 14 amazing drum kits
- 40 song-style patterns to jam with
- USB/MIDI out for recording

(SD5X) LIST: $999.99

$399.99
SAVE 60% OFF LIST

SD5X 2 YEAR WARRANTY

GET A SOUND PERCUSSION 5-PIECE ACOUSTIC KIT WITH HARDWARE, CYMBALS AND THRONE FOR AN INCREDIBLE LOW PRICE

$50 INSTANT REBATE

- Includes 22x18" kick, 10x8, 12x9 and 16x14" toms, and 14x5" snare
- Starter cymbal set with 13" hi-hats and 16" crash/ride
- Also includes stands for crash/ride cymbal, hi-hats and snare

(SP5A1NBK) (SP5A1NWR)
LIST: $599.99

YOUR CHOICE
AFTER $50 INSTANT REBATE
$349.99
SAVE 41% OFF LIST

PDP BY DW 4-PIECE HARDWARE PACK

EXCLUSIVE

- Pack includes hi-hat stand, cymbal boom stand, snare stand and kick drum pedal
- Double-braced, medium-duty hardware from PDP

(PGHW78-4) LIST: $333.99

$199.99
SAVE 40% OFF LIST

Guitar Center | TAMA | dw | Guitar Center

TAMA'S SILVERSTAR SERIES OFFERS SUPREME STYLE AND SOUND

The Silverstar series delivers premium quality and sound at a working musician's price. Using tried and true methods and materials, Tama has produced the highest quality instrument possible: 100% birch shells, triple-flanged hoops, a streamlined Star-Mount system, and a slideable tom holder make this the kit of choice for the creative musician. And with a wide variety of drum sizes, you have an open-ended sonic palette to create the new sound of your dreams.

- 5-, 6-, and 7-piece configurations
- Sizes vary by configuration
- Triple-flanged hoops, streamlined Star-Mount suspension system
- Stained interiors and a classic look and feel

HARDWARE, CYMBALS AND KICKPORT SOLD SEPARATELY
COLORS VARY BY LOCATION
(TAMA SILVERSTAR) LIST: $974.99- $1576.25

5-PIECE STARTING AT
$599.99
SAVE UP TO $562 OFF LIST

TAMA

FREE
TAMA IRON COBRA 600 SERIES SINGLE BASS DRUM PEDAL WITH PURCHASE OF ANY TAMA SILVERSTAR KIT—A $109 VALUE (HP600D)

TAMA'S STARCLASSIC BIRCH/BUBINGA KITS IN EXCITING NEW COLORS AND CONFIGURATIONS

NEW AT GUITAR CENTER

- Choose from black oyster or azure oyster lacquer, super maple, dark stardust fade, antique white sparkle, blue nebula blaze, cultured grain, dark cherry fade, indigo sparkle or red sparkle burst, smokey indigo burst, shattered turquoise, diamond dust, black/silver lining glass, exclusive finishes raspberry fade, jade green sparkle, vintage marine pearl or new volcanic burst (shown)

HARDWARE, CYMBALS AND SNARE SOLD SEPARATELY
COLORS AND CONFIGURATIONS VARY BY LOCATION
(TAMA BB SERIES)
LIST: $2307.00 - $3230.75

NEW

STARTING AT
$1499.99
SAVE UP TO 43% OFF LIST

TAMA'S SOUND LAB PROJECT EMBODIES QUALITY AT A WORKING MUSICIAN'S PRICE

$50 INSTANT REBATE

Guitar Center is proud to offer the latest line of quality snare drums from Tama. The Sound Lab Project, or SLP, aims to give drummers looking to upgrade their snare sound the opportunity to select from a wide array of boutique-caliber stylings offered at a working musician's price.

MODELS VARY BY LOCATION
SELECT STORES
(LST1455) (LGM137STA) (LMB1465MMB) (LGB146NQB) (LMP1455ATM) (LST1365) (LBR1465) (LAL145)

SEE STORE FOR PRICING

TAMA IRON COBRA 600 SERIES BASS DRUM PEDALS

- Featuring the all-new Duo Glide Sprocket
- The reversible sprocket allows you to change the pedal feel from Tama's legendary Power Glide cam action to the popular Rolling Glide feel in a matter of minutes
- Double Chain drive for ultimate power and longevity

SELECT STORES
(HP600D) (HP600DTW) LIST: $178.73 - $406.23

SINGLE PEDAL
$109.99
SAVE $68 OFF LIST

DOUBLE PEDAL
$249.99
SAVE $156 OFF LIST

ERGO RIDER DRUM THRONE FROM TAMA

- Front cutaway for complete unimpeded thigh movement with 20mm of soft foam
- A hybrid of a round seat and saddle seat
- 3 double-braced legs for secure playing
- Adjustable height

(HT730) LIST: $249.98

$149.99
SAVE $99 OFF LIST

Guitar Center

Zildjian

Guitar Center

FREE PDP HARDWARE PACK WITH THE PURCHASE OF ANY ZILDJIAN CAST CYMBAL PACK

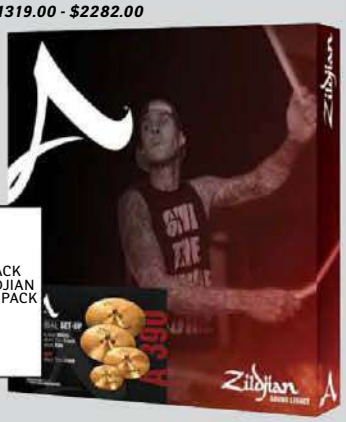
Zildjian has been making world-class cymbals for centuries, using ancient metallurgical techniques pioneered by the Turkish masters. These cast cymbal prepacks give you that legendary sound in a complete setup.

(A20579-11, A390, KP110) LIST: $1319.00 - $2282.00

A390 PACK STARTING AT

$679.99

SAVE UP TO 62% OFF LIST



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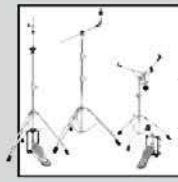


PDP 4-PIECE HARDWARE PACK WITH ANY ZILDJIAN CAST CYMBAL PACK PURCHASE – A $199 VALUE (PGHW78-4)

SAVE BIG ON ZILDJIAN ZBT CRASH CYMBALS

- Produced with a revolutionary manufacturing process
- Bright, intense tone that cuts through any mix

(ZBT16C) (ZBT18C) (ZBT19C) LIST: $139.00 - $180.00

16" CRASH STARTING AT

$74.99

SAVE UP TO 46% OFF LIST

FREE

$20 GIFT CARD WITH ZBT 16" OR LARGER CRASH CYMBAL PURCHASE (GIFT CARD TO BE USED ON FUTURE PURCHASES)

ZILDJIAN'S REVOLUTIONARY CYMBALS— NOW WITH DIRECT SOURCE PICKUPS

EXCLUSIVE△

- The world's first hybrid acoustic/electric cymbals
- Includes: 13" hi-hats and 18" crash/ride cymbal
- Direct Source pickups included
- Includes a Digital Cymbal Processor with preset tone-shaping capabilities

(G16AEBS3DS) LIST: $999.00

$649.99

SAVE $349 OFF LIST

2 PAIR OF STICKS AND A PRACTICE PAD IN THE ZILDJIAN PUCK PACK

- Small table-top practice pad
- 2 pairs of popular 5A sticks

(SDSP223) LIST: $46.00

$24.99

SAVE 45% OFF LIST

TRILOK GURTU "THREE-LOK" SIGNATURE STICK PACK

EXCLUSIVE△

- Hickory, wood tip, thumb groove at fulcrum point
- 16" length, 0.55" diameter
- U.S. hickory, double yellow dip handle
- Trilok Gurtu signature

(SDSP222) LIST: $53.25

3 PAIRS FOR

$26.99

SAVE 49% OFF LIST

CHECK OUT THIS ZILDJIAN CLOCK MADE FROM A REAL ZILDJIAN CYMBAL

(M2999)

$69.89

YAMAHA

YAMAHA LIVE CUSTOM SERIES DELIVERS MORE POWER AND DEEPER SOUND ONSTAGE

NEW AT GUITAR CENTER

- 100% oak shell set includes 22x18" kick, 16x15" floor tom, 10x7 and 12x8" toms
- Y.E.S.S. mount system for increased dynamic range and sustain
- Dark silver hardware and Yamaha Absolute lugs
- Die-cast bass drum hooks for noise-free function

SELECT STORES
HARDWARE, CYMBALS AND SNARE SOLD SEPARATELY
SELECTION VARIES BY LOCATION
(LC2F40AWS) (LC2F40BWS) LIST: $3320.00

NEW

YOUR CHOICE
$1799.99
SAVE 45% OFF LIST

YAMAHA'S MOST AFFORDABLE 100% BIRCH SHELL PACK IN 5 EXCITING FINISHES

$50 INSTANT REBATE

- Includes 10x8 and 12x9" rack toms and a 14x5.5" snare
- 22x17" bass drum and a 16x16" floor tom with raven black, honey amber or matte black kits
- 20" kick drum and 14" floor tom with natural or cranberry red kit
- 100% 6mm, 6-ply birch shells with an all-birch 7mm, 7-ply bass drum for outstanding resonance

HARDWARE AND CYMBALS SOLD SEPARATELY
COLORS VARY BY LOCATION
(SCB2FS50-RB) (SCB0F50-CR) (SCB0F50-NW)
(SCB2FS50-HA) (SCB2FS50-MB)

SEE STORE FOR PRICING

TOP-NOTCH YAMAHA SOUNDS ON THE COMPACT DTX430K ELECTRONIC KIT

$50 MAIL-IN REBATE

- Yamaha's high-quality tone generator with realistic acoustic drum, cymbal, and percussion sounds
- High-end oak, maple, beech and birch drums, with velocity-sensitive samples that respond to your playing dynamics
- Play along in different styles, with or without the recorded drum track, solo the bass player, or with the full ensemble
- Fun and easy-to-use onboard groove tools that set the standard for educational functions on an electronic kit

SELECT STORES
(DTX430K) LIST: $899.99

BEFORE $50 MAIL-IN REBATE
$599.99
SAVE $300 OFF LIST

FREE
PDP 800 SERIES ROUND TOP THRONE WITH PURCHASE OF YAMAHA DTX430K - A $64 VALUE (PGDT880)

HIGH-END SOUND AND FEATURES FROM THE YAMAHA DTX542K ELECTRONIC KIT

EXCLUSIVE△

- Comfortable, realistic DTX-PADs
- 3-zone snare, hi-hat, crash and ride cymbals
- DTX502 module with 691 drum, percussion and effect sounds, training functions, practice songs, and easy MIDI recording
- USB port allows plug-and-play control of VSTi software and importing of custom wave files

KICK PEDAL SOLD SEPARATELY
SELECT STORES
(DTX542K) LIST: $2999.00

$1599.99
SAVE 46% OFF LIST

FREE
SIMMONS DRUM AMP WITH PURCHASE OF DTX542K - A $209 VALUE (DA50)

CUT THROUGH WITH THE BRIGHT EDGE 14x6.5" STEEL SNARE FROM YAMAHA

$30 INSTANT REBATE

SELECT STORES
(SD266A) LIST: $249.99

AFTER $30 INSTANT REBATE
$119.99
SAVE 52% OFF LIST

YAMAHA SHORT BOOM CYMBAL STAND ARM

$7 INSTANT REBATE

(CH-750W) LIST: $60.00

AFTER $7 INSTANT REBATE
$29.99
SAVE 50% OFF LIST

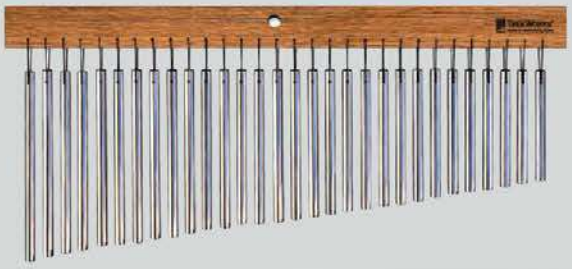
ENHANCE THE MIX WITH BRIGHT, SWEET TONE FROM TREEWORKS

- The cord is made with TreeWorks' CordLoc™, a select composition of fibers chosen for extreme strength
- Only select Tennessee hardwoods are used to make the mantle
- The chimes are custom-made with an alloy aluminum/titanium composition

(TRE303) LIST: $238.00

$124.99

SAVE 47% OFF LIST



TREEWORKS 3-TONE ENERGY CHIME

- Experience the hyper-resonant tones that never seem to end
- An excellent special effect
- Handmade in Nashville

SELECT STORES

(TRE909) LIST: $35.00

$19.99

SAVE 42% OFF LIST

BRING DRUM SOUND FROM THE DEPTHS TO THE SURFACE WITH AQUARIAN

- Convert any acoustic kit into an electro-acoustic hybrid
- Includes drum head and electronic trigger
- Layer samples and effects with your snare and kick drum sounds
- Installs quickly without altering drum shell

SELECT STORES

(14IHPK) LIST: $254.80

$169.99

SAVE $84 OFF LIST

AQUARIAN SUPER-KICK BASS DRUM HEAD

- A clear, 10 mil single-ply, medium-weight bass drum head
- The Super-Kick™ series features Aquarian's patented Floating Muffling System
- A narrow felt muffle ring is attached to the backside of the drum head to produce a low-end, well-defined punchy sound

(SK10-22) LIST: $88.00

$49.99

SAVE 43% OFF LIST

HEAVY-DUTY CYMBAL BAG WITH PADDED BACK STRAPS

- Ahead's exclusive DX-Core for incomparable durability
- Houses up to 24" cymbals
- Exterior hi-hat compartment
- Super heavy-duty back pack straps and waist reinforcement

(AR6023RS) LIST: $219.99

$142.99

SAVE $77 OFF LIST

THE REVOLUTIONARY OGIO HARDWARE SLED FROM AHEAD

- 38x16x14" padded, soft shell sled with tow handle
- Room for your cymbal stands, hi-hat and snare stands, kick pedals, throne and more

(AA5038W) LIST: $325.99

$210.99

SAVE $115 OFF LIST

16th-note triplets over the barline so freely?

Spanky: It's about getting comfortable. I remember I would slow down certain rolls to get comfortable playing them and to get them tight. Then you can play them faster and faster. Eventually you have so much control that you will be able to execute them better. I always slowed everything down, then sped it up.

I'm always focused on where my snare hits land; I make sure they're hitting in the middle. Often with rolls you might catch a little bit of the rim or your hits may not be directly in the middle of the drum. That can make drumrolls sound kind of iffy. If I'm taking a tour around the kit and I hit the rim just a little bit, I think, *Oh, no!*

So the comfort starts with doing everything slow and making sure your drums are set up correctly. A lot of drummers play the toms flat, for instance. It's hard to roll around the kit if your toms are flat; it's about making little adjustments and making it easier to execute certain stickings.

MD: Your playing is very clean. Everything is pronounced. How do you get that clarity on the kit? You get a great sound on the drums.

Spanky: I think it comes from practicing. Sit down and get to know yourself musically. Focus on all your disadvantages first. Don't practice only what you do well. Work on what you need to perfect, whether it's timing or playing to a metronome. Practice playing time—practice makes perfect.

MD: What were *your* disadvantages? What were you not good at?

Spanky: I remember playing basketball; I couldn't dribble with my left hand. So I started playing grooves that stressed my left hand, to see how much I could keep it up. Of course it was hard. But eventually my left hand got stronger, and that definitely increased my playing. And one night I broke my right big toe, and I couldn't hit the bass drum at all. So I had to turn the kit around and play bass drum with my left foot. That helped me.

MD: Now your left hand is so strong you sometimes seem ambidextrous.

Spanky: That's one of the goals. Even writing your signature with your left hand will strengthen it. It all helps.

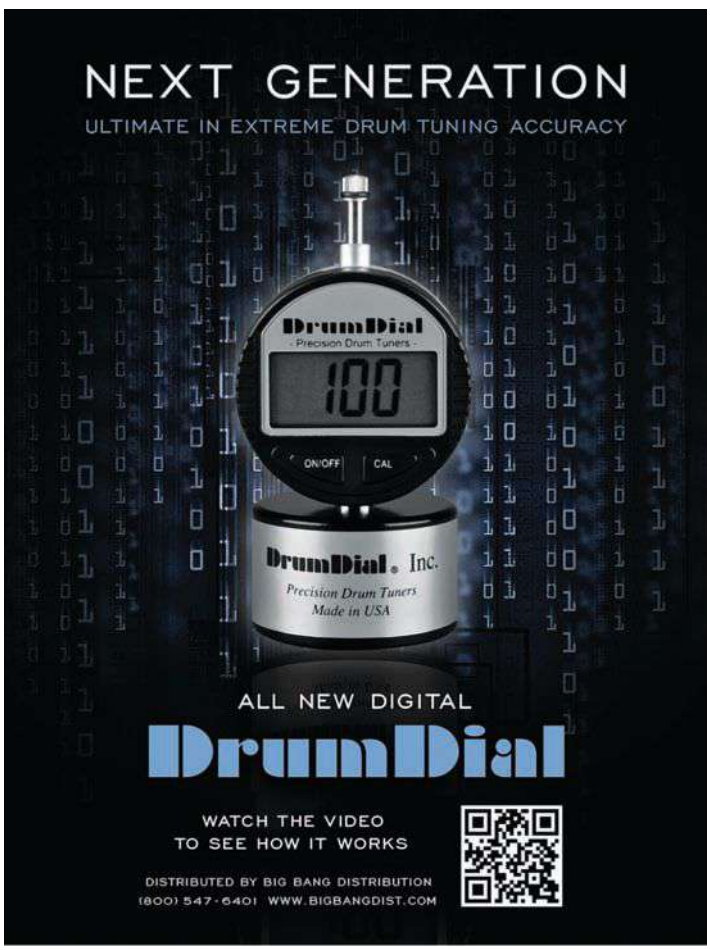
MD: Also, while keeping a groove, you often come far off the snare head with your sticks. Why do that?

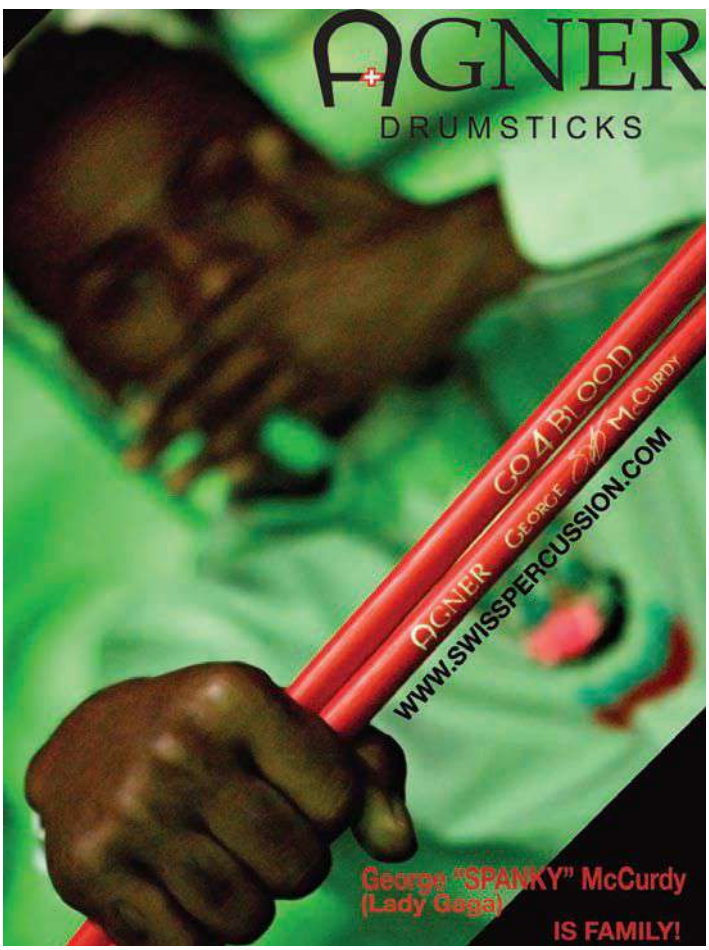
Spanky: Maybe it's just what I'm feeling at the time. I like to move—maybe it's stage presence. I don't want to chill all the time; I want to be more drastic sometimes.

MD: Did you practice the rudiments growing up?

Spanky: Yes, I practiced out of the Podemski book [*Standard Snare Drum Method*]. It's mostly rudiments. Paradiddles were my favorite. I worked out of Podemski when I was nine years old. All the RRLL sticking was crazy. To a lot of drummers, it might seem easy. But I have a new mindset now and I want to revisit it.

MD: Throughout the DVD you're very adept at playing odd-meter phrases and accenting within them. You also accent





SPANKY'S LADY GAGA SETUP

Spanky's rig features a Tama Starclassic Performer Bubinga/Birch series drumset in custom molten blue/purple burst finish, including a 6.5x14 matching snare; 5x10, 6x10, and 6x12 rack toms; 12x15 and 12x16 floor toms; and an 18x20 bass drum. His Sabian cymbals include 13" HHX Evolution hi-hats, a 19" HHX X-Treme crash, a 20" AAX Metal ride, an 18" O-Zone crash stacked on top of a 17" AAX X-Plosion Fast crash, and a 16" AAX X-Plosion crash. His Evans heads include PC Reverse Dot snare batters, Onyx tom batters, and an EMAD bass drum batter. He uses an LP Ridge Rider Classic cowbell, a Roland Octapad and SPD-SX, and Agner/Swiss Percussion George "Spanky" McCurdy Go 4 Blood Signature sticks. Spanky's drum tech is Raegan Wexler.

the second and fourth notes of 16th-note patterns on practically any source in the kit. How did you master that?

Spanky: First, you have to pay attention to the foundation of the music and what's coming next—that will determine what you do. And you have to know where the 1 is before you can play off it. It's not about going crazy and coming back when you want. It's cool to play over the barline, depending on what else is happening musically. But if we're going into a bridge and that requires a fill, you know not to do anything crazy. Don't go over the barline a bar before the bridge—you have to do a fill there. It's little stuff, but it all matters. It's a placement thing.

MD: How would you begin playing odd phrases?

Spanky: I would definitely recommend playing with a track. At first I would play some things and people would think it was off, or wrong. Sometimes I will play four bars of straight time and then four bars of my off-time groove. When you switch back and forth, people can hear it more clearly.

MD: Did off-time playing come naturally to you? At one point in the DVD you discuss accenting a pattern and then moving the accent around within the pattern. Did you learn that slowly?

Spanky: I don't want to say it came naturally. But when I thought about the snare pattern, for instance, I realized all I had to do was move my hands somewhere else on my drumset. The left hand can now go to the bell of my first crash, and my right hand can go to the floor tom. It's just logic, thinking of new things to do. The same roll can be applied differently—I can switch up, spread it out over my first tom and my hi-hat, versus the snare drum and floor tom. You tell your mind to do it, then you execute it. It's orchestrating.

Take a roll you've been doing for years between your snare and floor tom. Now do the same roll between the hi-hat and the first tom. It might be an adjustment, but before you know it you'll be doing other fills in other spots. It will seem like new chops and fills, but really you're just orchestrating differently, taking different avenues.

MD: When you're playing long strings of 16th or even 32nd notes, do you hear them rhythmically or melodically?

Spanky: It depends on the music and what I'm playing behind it, but if I'm going fast it's definitely a rhythmic idea.

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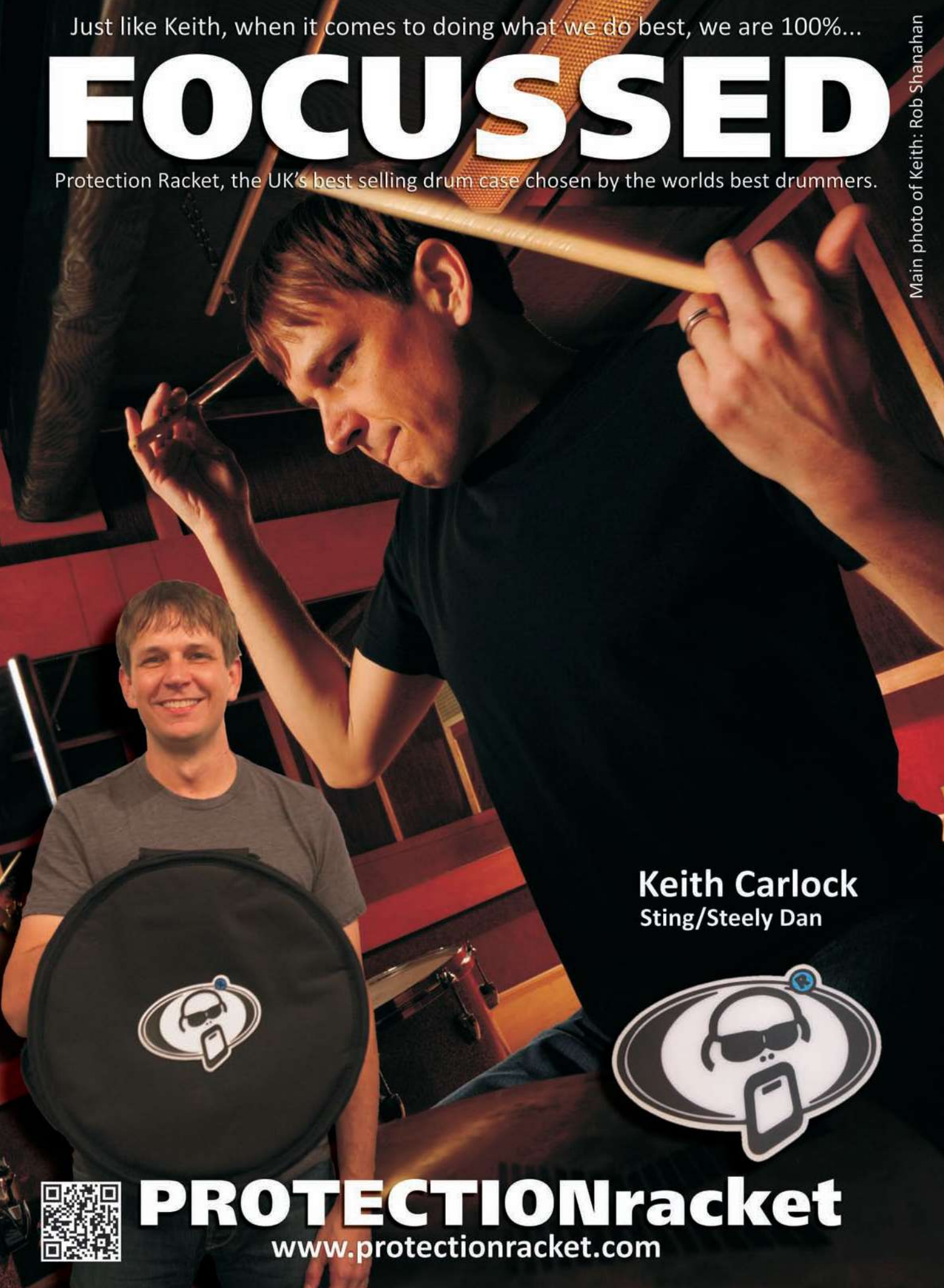

Main photo of Keith: Rob Shanahan

Keith Carlock
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MD: Where do you get to play off-time phrases? Backstage jams with Gaga's band? Somewhere after hours in Philly?
Spanky: There are certain parts in the show where I can pick my spots, but I don't take it out of the element of the song. I try to stay within the element, especially with Gaga, even though we have a lot of freedom. I don't bust out with off-time stuff all the time. But we do jam all the time and do band

shows. Generally I pick my spots to play off-time.
MD: Where do you initially place the bass drum when developing off-time phrases?
Spanky: You can start with the 1. Or the 2, the 3, or the 4.
MD: Is the sequenced keyboard pattern in the DVD's "Switcheroo Take One" 8th notes or 16th notes? Later in the track you play a long snare roll. Does that consist of the partial diddle?
Spanky: It's 8th notes. And yes, that's the partial diddle. The partial diddle is a paradiddle, but only using the right-side sticking [RLRRL, RLRRL, RLRRL…]. You start the paradiddle, then start it over again. Then you can extend it into a roll and move accents around within the diddle once you're comfortable.
MD: You barely play 2 and 4 in the section "Switcheroo Take Two." There are full-set broken triplets, "3-&" snare accents, and unusual hesitations.
Spanky: The hesitations come from me doing something and then feeling a break or a pause coming. It's weird, but it's not weird. I take a small break. I call those "stutters."
MD: I assume you're feeling and not counting the beats in your grooves, but is the 1 always in mind?
Spanky: Always, especially from doing all these gigs where the click track is running all the time. Even when there is no click, I always hear the click in my head! Sometimes Jill Scott will say "Slow down" or "Pick it up," and I have to say "No, it's perfect," in the nicest way ever. Because the click is always inside my head.
MD: What do you use as a click with Lady Gaga?
Spanky: I like a semi-high-pitched cowbell. It's not like a Will Ferrell *Saturday Night Live* cowbell; it's more subtle. But I can hear that over the track. I don't like it loud. I want it to be like it's a percussionist playing with you. And it never gets in the way. It runs in my in-ears. I worked on my click sound yesterday, new sounds. Our programmer puts in the slate, the count-offs. The entire show is mapped out. I am a hundred percent comfortable with that. Everything is programmed, but it's still so organic. We have so many different interludes live. And we play live. It's not like a regular pop show; we do stretch a whole lot. So having that foundation is good.
MD: Is there a particular spot when you get to stretch?
Spanky: Guys get to stretch in every song. Then just Lady Gaga herself, her

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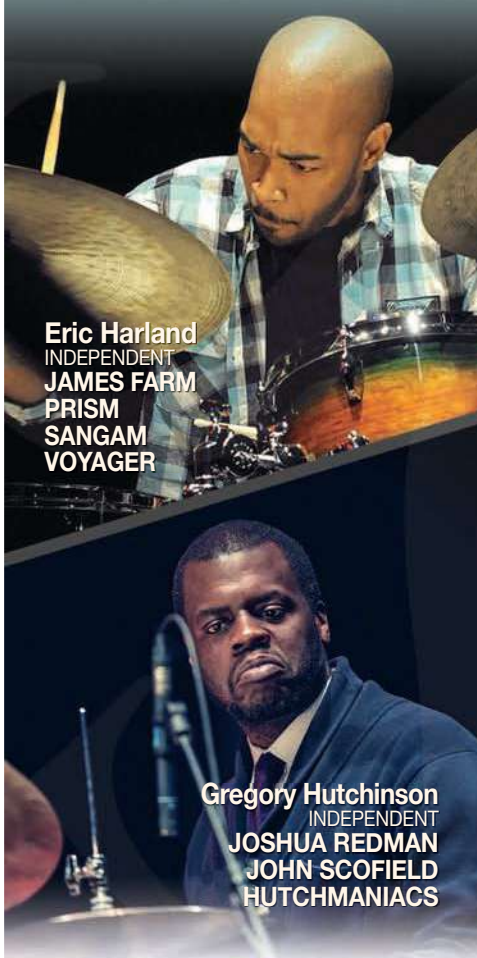

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dancing, the presentation, the dancers, the costumes. Then the band, the sound, the mix. I really like our whole presentation—it's incredible.

MD: In "Switcheroo Take Four" you play a long string of 32nd notes. Can you break down the sticking?

Spanky: It's really like a groove to me. It sounds like a roll, but I try to present it casually to make it sound like a groove. Usually I wouldn't do a super-long roll. But I think that's a bit of the partial diddle with different dynamics in certain spots.

MD: How do you get comfortable playing the partial diddle and then accenting within it as a phrase?

Spanky: For those who know the rudiments, you already know how to do it. It's just placing it in your drumset playing versus playing [it only on the snare]. Having taken snare drum lessons for years, I already knew the partial diddle.

I think everything about the drums can be utilized. I'm looking for a xylophone now; that's what I was taught at Settlement Music School when I was a teenager. I was just getting started on xylophone double-mallet playing. I eventually want to utilize everything I've learned: rudiments, cymbal techniques, timpani, everything. I played in the orchestra for years. On Kanye West's gig I played V-Drums, a big percussion rig, two timpani, standard drumset—it was crazy. But it wasn't crazy, because I understood everything.

MD: How long did you study?

Spanky: I studied privately for six years from age twelve at Esther Boyer College of Music in Temple University in Philadelphia, where my dad worked in the chemistry department. He was the head of the department, anything and everything to do with chemicals and equipment. I studied with Mr. Willis, the orchestra instructor of Temple's Esther Boyer Youth Orchestra. I had a different teacher for snare drum, which I studied along with percussion. I played percussion, all types of trinkets and slapsticks and percussion instruments, everything. I hated it! "Can't I just chill and play Nintendo?" But I had to go.

MD: Your parents knew you had talent.

Spanky: Yeah, especially my dad. It didn't really occur to me until some years ago just how influential my parents have been, especially my dad. Growing up in the church, it wasn't as easy to just venture off and play drums. You get ridiculed for playing with certain people, and certain religious people have their opinions; sometimes it was a lot to deal with. But my parents really supported me. That is the only reason why I am where I am. If I had listened, I would have quit this gig or that gig and I would have conformed to playing gospel music.

MD: And you played in the orchestra throughout high school?

Spanky: I stopped in ninth grade, then in eleventh grade I made it to the All-City Jazz Ensemble. In high school I was playing band, but it wasn't that serious. Then my band teacher urged

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me to go to All-City. I saw my friends there, and I was reading more charts, getting back into it. I was swinging too. I did that for two years, in '98 and '99.

MD: And you played drums in church?

Spanky: I still play in church, the Open Door Mission church in Philadelphia. I started when I was eight or nine. I began with the youth choir, and then I played every Sunday. Then my dad left and started his own ministry, Greater Love Temple of Faith, and I played drums there. Now my sister has taken over since my dad passed.

MD: Your drumset heroes were Brian Frasier-Moore and Lil' John Roberts, right? Which albums did you listen to for drumset technique?

Spanky: Oh, man, I love the records by a local Philadelphia choir, Tony Moore and Jehovah's Chosen. Just to give you a little history, Tony Moore came to my church when I was thirteen. His choir had the baddest musicians, like James Poyser on keyboards and Andre Harris on drums, who played on Usher's "Caught Up" and Michael Jackson's "Butterflies." And Lil' John and Brian, who were playing double drums sometimes. Back then, they only played in the choir.

MD: Was it more about seeing those drummers perform live than about hearing them record?

Spanky: Both. I was a sponge. *Love Lifted Me* by Jehovah's Chosen—Lil' John Roberts destroys on that album. Steve Middleton with Brian Frasier-Moore on *Praises From the Soul*. Those guys would come home and do sessions, and seeing them accomplish what I wanted to do was so encouraging. To now be in that position, it's amazing. Also, Meshell Ndegeocello's *Comfort Woman* and *The Spirit Music Jamia: Dance of the Infidel*, with Chris Dave. He's like a modern-day Tony Williams. Not only is he a drummer I look up to and am totally inspired by, but we're friends. We're homies; we can sit down and chill. I let people know Chris Dave is a supreme legend, like Lil' John and Brian, or Questlove.

MD: Have programmers like J Dilla been a big influence on your drumming?

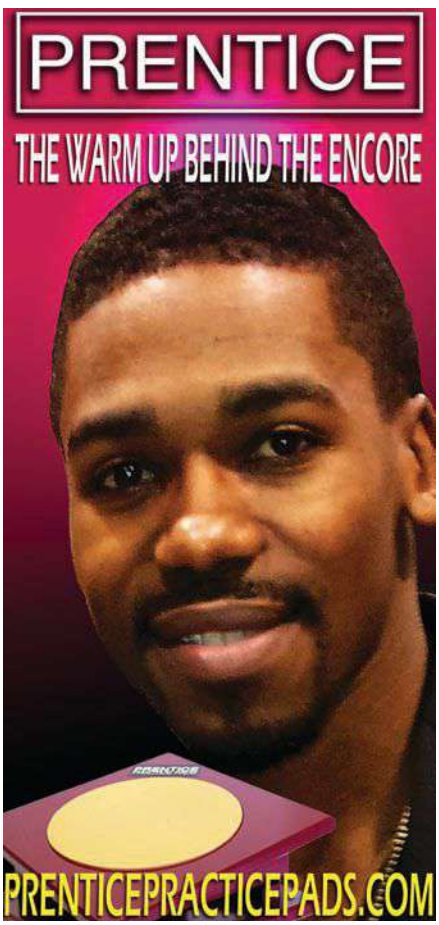
Spanky: Yes, sir. I remember Tony Moore from Jehovah's Chosen brought me into the studio once and made me play to a Slum Village CD, with J Dilla, from top to bottom. It was like boot camp. I'm recording my album at Tony Moore's studio. It's almost done.

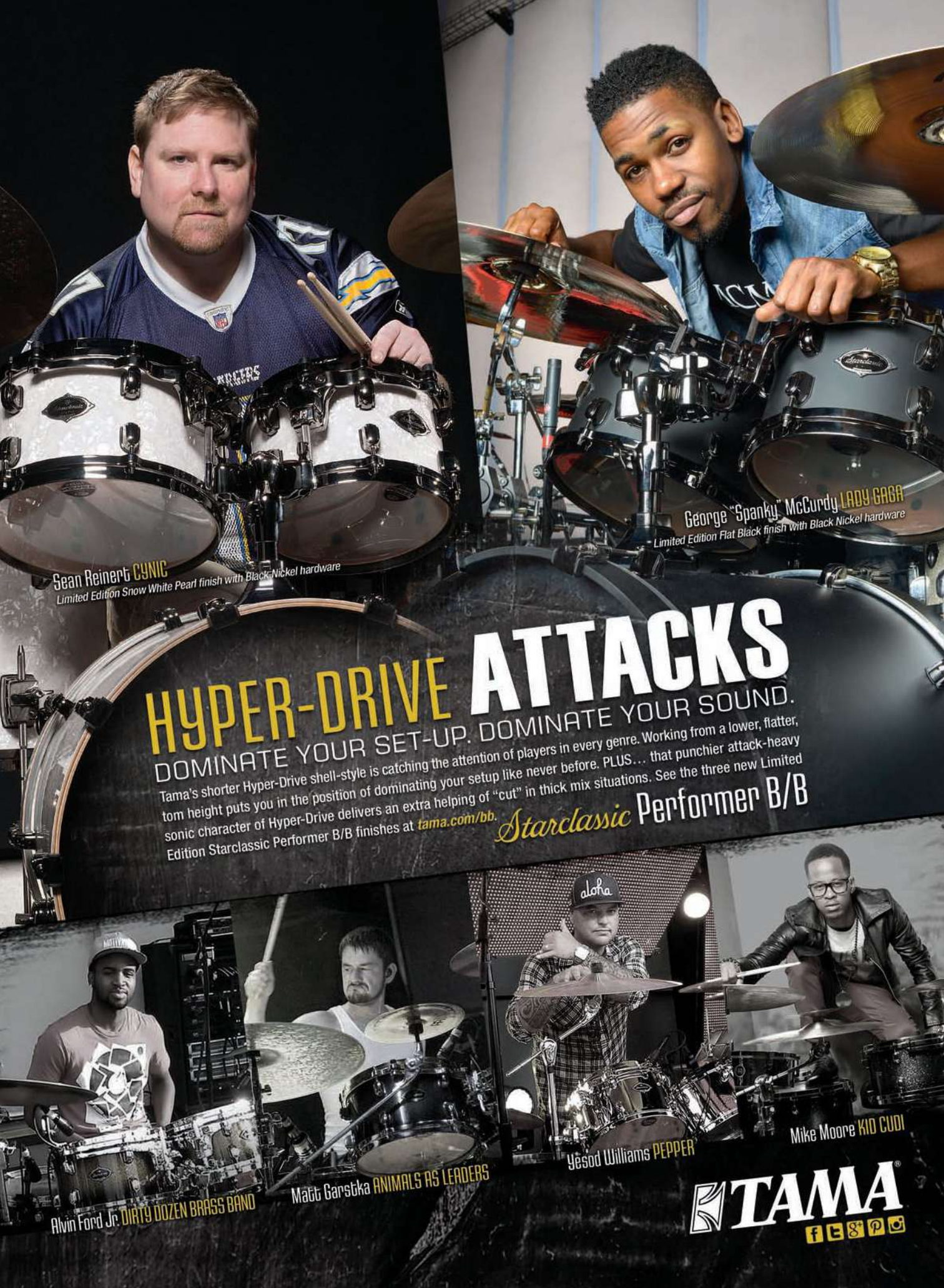
MD: What's the title?

Spanky: It's called *Spank Sinatra*. I might sing a little on it, but I'm not a concert vocalist. I have a couple star vocalists, including Jill Scott and Q-Tip. It's very atmospheric, and the singers bring the songs to life. I want it to be songs, not jamming. It's somewhat like the songs on the DVD; we do "Silk" on the album with vocals.

MD: How did J Dilla influence you?

Spanky: I had never heard so much feel in a programmed track before J Dilla. It felt better than a drummer playing it. He's just the nucleus of hip-hop for me—the beats, the dynamics. He'd program multiple kick drums, multiple snare drums, little stuff like that. My teachers wanted to show me the dynamics, how he would just tap a hi-hat a little bit on top. I improved dynamically just from hearing Dilla's beats and trying to mimic them. He's

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MD: Are you a fan of the Gospel Chops videos?

Spanky: Not so much. We shared that stuff, but our thing was about the vibe while you're jamming. I'm not into a showcase, going from drummer to drummer. I like to communicate while I play. I like to look at you while I'm playing, and I might piggyback off what you're doing. That's how we play. Gospel Chops is cool, but I notice that the drummers don't get much out of it. It's a free-for-all. I don't like to do that, though I can.

MD: What is a day in the life of Lady Gaga's band? How does it differ from other tours?

Spanky: I'm in a band with some awesome players. There's no load to pull. Everyone carries their weight. They all do their job. It's so easy playing with professionals and the best of the best. It's really a career. I wake up, exercise, make sure I eat right and that my body is conditioned. You can't be out of shape on tour. I do over 250 push-ups, sets of twenty-five over a couple hours. Then I eat breakfast. I listen to music all day. I love to shop; I have a clothing line coming out, called StarstruK. I love to go to the barbershop; I want to look fresh and nice. I'm single, man! The possibilities—I'm there! That is definitely another side of touring that nobody talks about: the girls. Pray my strength. It's been crazy. It's a journey, drumming, touring; it's mind-blowing. I am so grateful.

MD: When does the band rehearse?

Spanky: We don't rehearse all day long. We focus on what we have to do and get it done. If we say, "We're going to do four bars in a bridge, not eight, and we're only going to do one verse," that's it. It's locked in; we have it. We play the song and it's all cool. Lady Gaga comes for the rehearsals. She sits down and builds the music with us. She takes time, and she plays as well. When she says she's going to do something, she does it.

MD: Do you make your own charts?

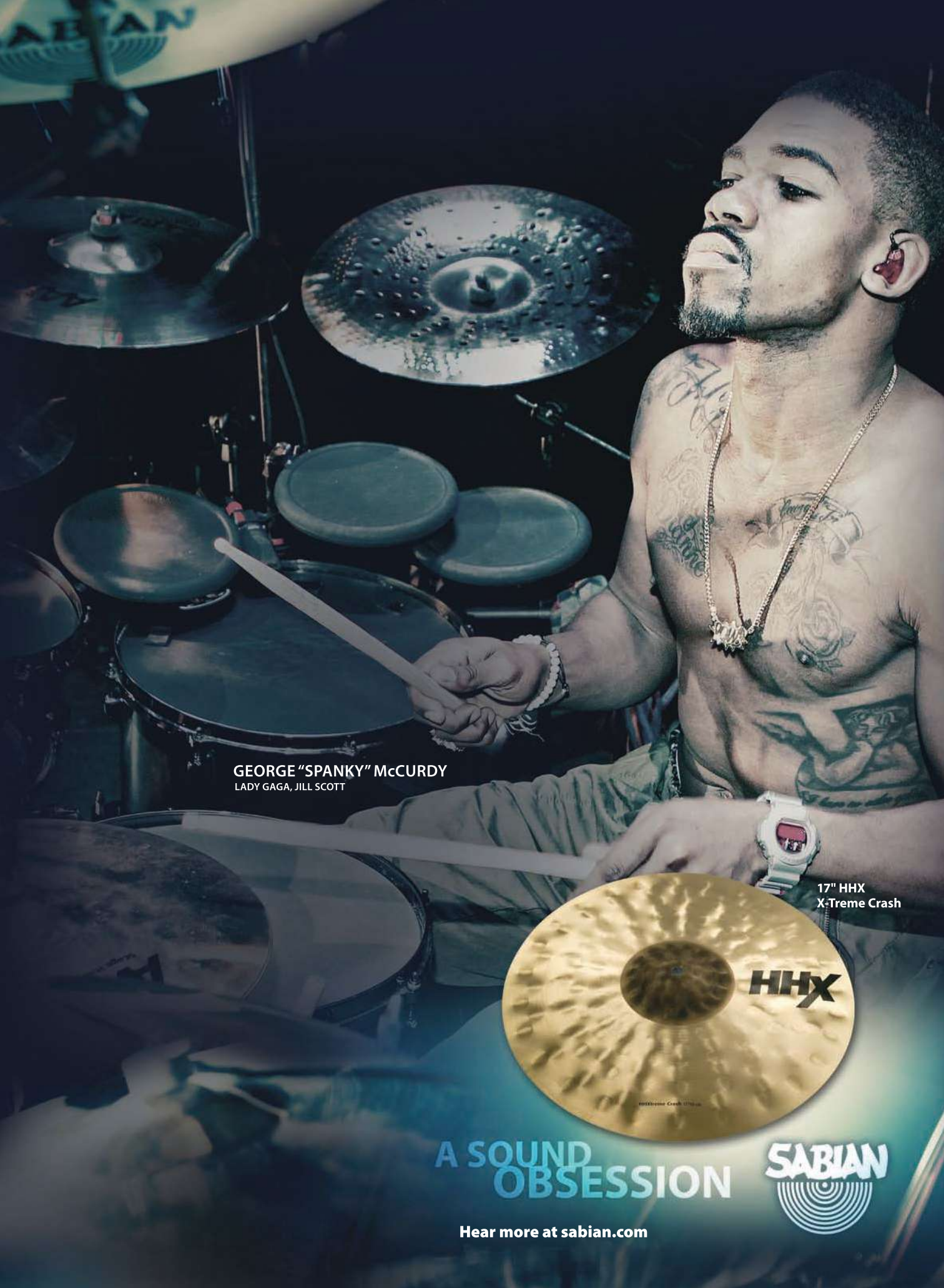
Spanky: No. I memorize everything.

MD: What do you practice on the road?

Spanky: When I practice I just groove. I like to groove a lot, but not regular grooves. I'm so random. Yesterday I sat at the kit and worked on my rimshot sound, just perfecting it. I really want a cracking rimshot sound. I was flipping the stick from butt end to tip, playing snare head to rimshot. Lil' John showed me that when I was a kid, so I was working on that. Flip the stick to the side, bring it back, rimshot. Flip the stick to the side, bring it back, snare head, all within a song.

MD: Why do you think so many musicians want to hire you?

Spanky: First of all, it's a blessing. It's amazing. I think it's because I'm comfortable with myself. And my focus is always to push the artist higher, every single night. You will never get a night from me where I'm complaining, "Oh, I don't feel like playing." I'm always aware of what the fans need and what the artist is trying to do and what our job is as a band. That's what I'm focused on. If I'm coming in, it's time to go higher, time to upgrade, time to go forth. And I always want to push myself and be the heartbeat of every band I work with. I'm honored. Being a musician is like being a missionary, minus the altar call and the laying on of hands.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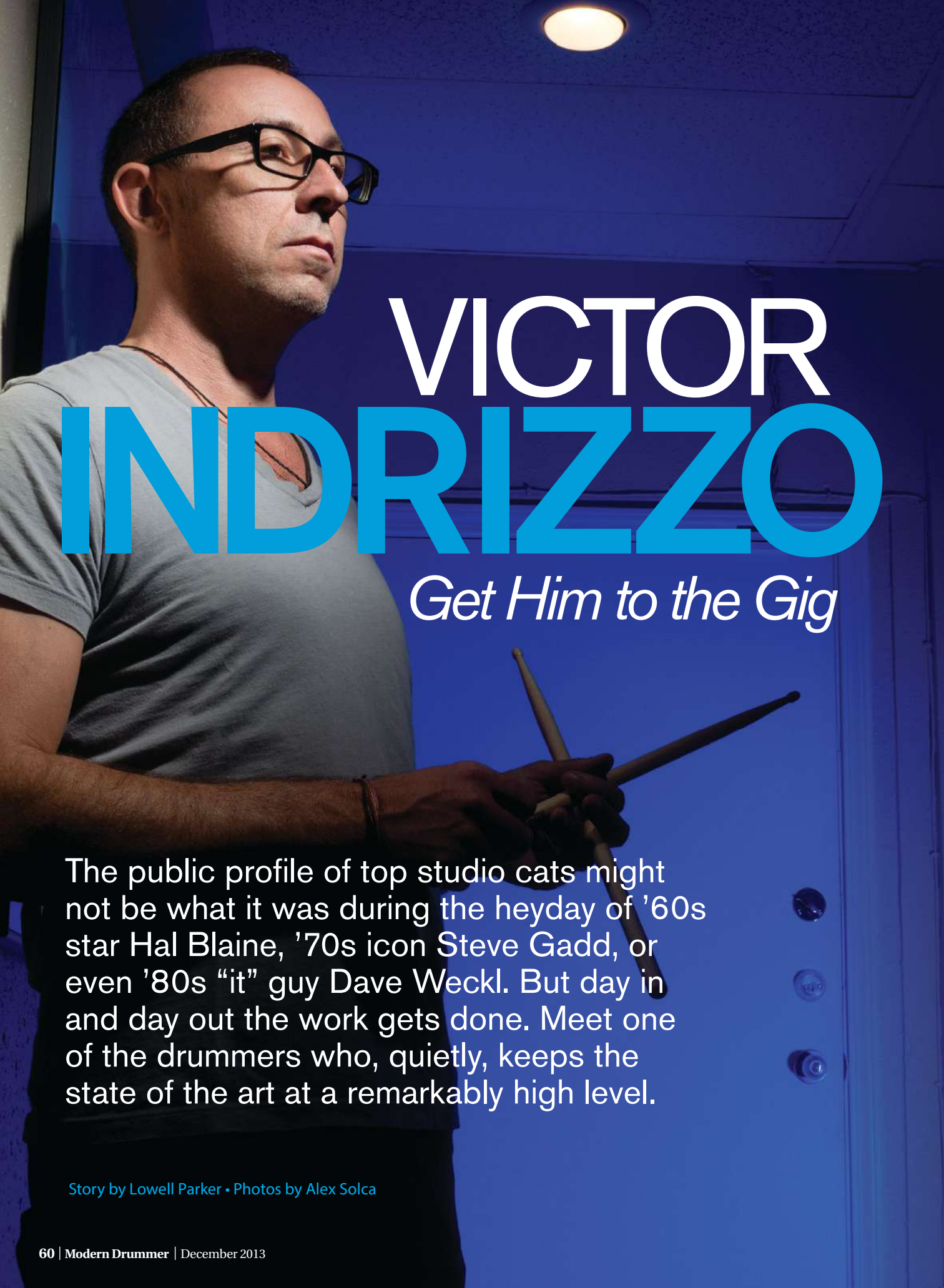


VICTOR INDRIZZO

Get Him to the Gig

The public profile of top studio cats might not be what it was during the heyday of ’60s star Hal Blaine, ’70s icon Steve Gadd, or even ’80s “it” guy Dave Weckl. But day in and day out the work gets done. Meet one of the drummers who, quietly, keeps the state of the art at a remarkably high level.

Story by Lowell Parker • Photos by Alex Solca

Even if you've never heard of Victor Indrizzo, you've *heard* Victor Indrizzo—frequently. As a prolific L.A.-based session player, he's on an astounding number of hit records that span a wide range of genres, including rock, hip-hop, country, singer-songwriter, and Latin music. Due to Indrizzo's chameleonlike ability to incorporate himself into any situation and play the appropriate thing, top producers like Joe Chiccarelli continually turn to him for tracking drums. From the punk-influenced pop of Avril Lavigne's "Complicated" to the earthy, bare-bones approach of Willie Nelson's *Teatro* album, Indrizzo delivers with a sound that Chiccarelli describes as "the perfect combination of band-member swagger and studio-drummer finesse."

Indrizzo's diversity and flexibility have led to opportunities to play with countless major artists. You'll hear Victor on Alanis Morissette's 2012 studio album, *Havoc and Bright Lights*, and tour document *Live at Montreux 2012*, as well as on records by Colbie Caillat, Sheryl Crow, Depeche Mode, Macy Gray, Shakira, and Rob Thomas. Of particular note is his playing on the eclectic Mexican band Café Tacvba's album *Cuatro Caminos*, which won the 2004 Grammy for Best Latin Rock/Alternative Album and Latin Grammys for Best Alternative Album and Best Rock Song for the track "Eres." *Cuatro Caminos* was also named Best Album of the Decade by the popular global-pop website ClubFonograma.com.

In addition to his other session work, Indrizzo is active recording movie scores and soundtracks, including *Spider-Man* and *Spider-Man 2*, *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, *Wedding Crashers*, and *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*. He's even found himself in front of the camera, as a member of the group Infant Sorrow in *Get Him to the Greek*. And as film scores have evolved to include more popular styles, the demand for the drummer's services has increased. Feature-film composer and former Beck guitarist Lyle Workman frequently uses Indrizzo for his movie projects, due to his "superb feel, timing, and choice of sound."

> "As a kid, I read a roundtable interview in *Modern Drummer* with a bunch of session guys, and they were all talking about playing with click tracks. I bought a metronome and started sleeping with it under my pillow."

Despite the major impression he's made across music and movies—and on stage, touring with Beck, Samiam, and Scott Weiland, among others—Indrizzo may well be the industry's best-kept secret when it comes to drumming. His name is not common knowledge among casual music fans, and with downloading and streaming technology keeping liner notes out of listeners' hands, Indrizzo and session drummers like him may largely continue to remain a relative secret. But with his wealth of knowledge and experience and his vast catalog of exceptional drumming, Indrizzo is a player that every student of the craft should be familiar with. After all, you've already been listening to him.

MD: You've collaborated with such a wide range of artists that it's difficult to even categorize the work you've done. How did you become a go-to session drummer?

Victor: I got into session drumming as a fluke. I was a band guy, and a resurgence of punk-influenced rock started happening in the early '90s. Labels were signing up all these bands, but none of the guys could play to a click track. I could, so I started ghosting on their records. I started getting work. I never really thought it would be possible for me to go into sessions, because I wasn't a schooled musician. But luckily, slowly, by building on that ability and through being a fan of so many different styles of music, I just started getting in there more and more. One guy tells another guy, who tells another guy, who tells another, and I find myself working.

MD: Would you expand on the subject of playing with a click?

Victor: Playing with a click can be very daunting. Very early on, when I was a kid, I remember reading in *Modern Drummer* a roundtable interview with a bunch of session guys, and they were all talking about playing with clicks and how important that was. And I took that very seriously. When I was about nineteen, I was doing my first record and I didn't want to get replaced. I knew I had to practice with a click track, so I bought a metronome and started sleeping with it under my pillow and spending a lot of time with it to erase the fear of it. I would imagine different beats all around the click: half time, double time, everything. Just having it as part of the groove made things so much easier for me.

Since then, I've played to clicks almost every day of my life, which has made me very comfortable with it. I'm the kind of player who doesn't want to think about things other than what I'm doing or feeling. And if I have to start thinking about the click track, then I'm already in trouble. So it was really necessary for me to get to a place where the click felt like just one more thing that I was playing along with, as opposed to something I'm trying to follow. So now when I'm playing with a click track, it's just part of everything that's going on in the song. I've learned how to lay behind it a little bit, or go on top of it to make the song sound a little more urgent, or I can just hang right with it.

MD: Once you began doing sessions, was there a certain point when you decided to pursue it as a career?

Victor: There are so many factors in actually making a living playing drums. I think nowadays it's probably harder than ever, and for younger guys coming up and starting, it can be brutal. But I think it depends on the individual. I always had an attitude of, "This is what I'm going to do—there is nothing else." I was a high school dropout and I knew I wanted to play music, so I just went after it like there was no other choice for me.

I've always been of the mindset that I say yes to almost everything. If someone's going to pay me to play drums, then that is a winning scenario. Now, as a father with kids, there are obviously things I can't do because they don't pay enough. But with that being said, I've always been the guy willing to work as hard or as long as necessary and do whatever I have to do to make a living at this. And over many years of drumming, it's paid off and I've gotten into a nice spot where I can do it.

But I also know that my situation can change. I look at the history of musicians—guys who were the top session drummers—and there just comes a day when the phone stops ringing. It may be that what they're doing has gone out of style, or maybe people want to use the younger guy—there are tons of reasons. So I just keep going after it like it's all I've got.

I think it's going to be harder for the next generation of guys. The thing that's

RECORDINGS

Willie Nelson Teatro /// **Depeche Mode** Ultra /// **Scott Weiland** 12 Bar Blues /// **Chris Cornell** Euphoria Morning /// **Michael Penn** MP4 /// **Brad Mehldau** Largo /// **Macy Gray** The Trouble With Being Myself /// **Avril Lavigne** Let Go /// **Juanes** Mi Sangre /// **Paul Stanley** Live to Win /// **Colbie Caillat** Coco /// **A Fine Frenzy** Bomb in a Birdcage /// **Rob Thomas** "Her Diamonds" /// **Rachael Yamagata** Chesapeake /// **Seal** Soul 2 /// **Alanis Morissette** Havoc and Bright Lights /// Horrible Bosses soundtrack /// Matrix Reloaded soundtrack /// Get Him to the Greek soundtrack

harder about the music business now is that people are less willing to take chances. Let's say you're a young drummer who comes to Los Angeles and you want to play on a record. Nobody wants to take the chance if they don't know you. Whereas before, the budgets were so big that they could afford to lose a day if you didn't work out. They'd let you try for a day, and if you weren't cutting it they'd just call the next guy. Now, if they lost a day, it would be a tragedy. They don't have the budgets anymore to spend a day on a guy who's not cutting it.

MD: How much of your work involves live studio sessions, as opposed to using file transfers and working remotely?

Victor: It varies. I have my own studio, and people often come to me with a hard drive, and I can track drums. But it does fluctuate. Sometimes there will be a bunch of sessions where all the guys are there, the top guys, and we just knock out a bunch of songs in a day.

Willie Nelson's *Teatro* is one of my favorite records that we recorded live. It's a bit of an odd album and was very fun and scary to record. I had previously met the producer, Daniel Lanois, when working with Scott Weiland of Stone Temple Pilots. Meeting Daniel was a big deal, and it led to so many other great things for me, *Teatro* being one of them. The album was recorded completely live, with everybody in the room. There was no preproduction. Willie would play through the song one time, and then we would start recording. We were to do no more than two takes of any song.

There was no bass player—Daniel played bass on maybe two of the songs. When you're playing drums without a bass player, it feels very naked. For direction, all Daniel said to me was, "Don't play anything typical." I was already nervous enough to be in the room with all those people—it was such a big deal for me—and then to be told not to play anything typical, I was petrified. But I feel really proud of that record and how it turned out.

Other times, there are only a couple guys in the studio, typically the bass player and myself, tracking the stuff almost after the fact. Quite often, especially on the more pop stuff, the drums are tracked last.

These days, things have to get done a lot faster, and it's not uncommon to track a record in just two days, and in some cases *one* day. While this can lead to more opportunities to record, with the hit that the music industry is taking I feel like I have to do twice as much work to make what I did ten years ago. At the same time, I don't feel sorry for myself, because out there in the world there are a lot of people doing the same thing: working twice as hard to make what they did ten years ago.

MD: Was it the shift away from live studio sessions that drove you to set up your own studio?

Victor: I've just seen the writing on the wall for a long time. Coming up, I saw that guys who adapted to changes, as opposed to being afraid of them, were able to hang in there and keep going. Guys that stayed rigid about what they were doing would get run over. I've seen that happen so many times. Once people started downloading music and stealing it, I saw that things were going to change for us. I had a feeling that having my own studio and my own place to do things was going to become essential. And it really *has* become essential. Each year, more and more work gets done out of my own place.

MD: What has helped you the most to succeed professionally?

Victor: To be a successful session guy, you have to know how to read a song, read the people, and decipher the code of what they're telling you. Not everyone has the vocabulary for saying exactly what they want. People that aren't drummers might not even know to say, "Can we tape up that snare?" or

VICTOR'S SETUP

Indrizzo says that since every session demands different gear, he chooses from several drumsets that he keeps in his home studio, including Gretsch and OCDP kits, a Slingerland concert-tom set, and the Ludwig kit pictured here. He also chooses from various Zildjian cymbal models. The set he happened to have up the day we took these photos includes the following.

Drums:
A. 6.5x14 OCDP Bell Brass snare
B. 8x12 Ludwig tom
C. 16x16 Ludwig floor tom
D. 16x22 Ludwig bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 14" vintage 1970s hi-hats
2. 20" Constantinople Hi-Bell Thin Low ride (usually an 18" K Dark Medium Thin crash)
3. 22" K Light ride with three rivets

Hardware: DW 9000 series stands, bass drum pedal, and hi-hat stand

Heads: Evans. For studio work, Indrizzo also has 20" and 22" bass drums fitted with goatskin heads from Pro Drum.

Sticks: Vater New Orleans Jazz model, Heavy Wire Tap brushes, and T5 mallets

Accessories: Vater Multi-Pair Stick Holder

"Let's make the snare more ringy and high-pitched," which would bring a different feeling to the song.

Being able to choose the right sound is something that producers look for. Part of the reason I get hired is because I will have an idea of how things should sound: what kit to use, which snares, cymbals, etc., and that's just something I've developed over a long period of time. It's intuition and instinct. I'll listen to a song and I'll often know right away what I want to use. Each snare in my studio is a bit different, and I've prided myself on being able to listen and let the song tell me which to use. When I have to go to a different studio, I have a cartage company bring all my gear to the session, and I'll have probably twenty snare drums, although I'll likely only use the one or two that I normally use. But I like to have my options available.

Sometimes if they have a good idea of what they want, they'll guide me a little. Maybe someone will say, "I really loved the snare sound on this record," and then I can listen to it and say, "Well, it sounds really compressed" or "It sounds like he's got the snare really taped up." Being around engineers and learning how to achieve the sounds you hear on an album has been beneficial.

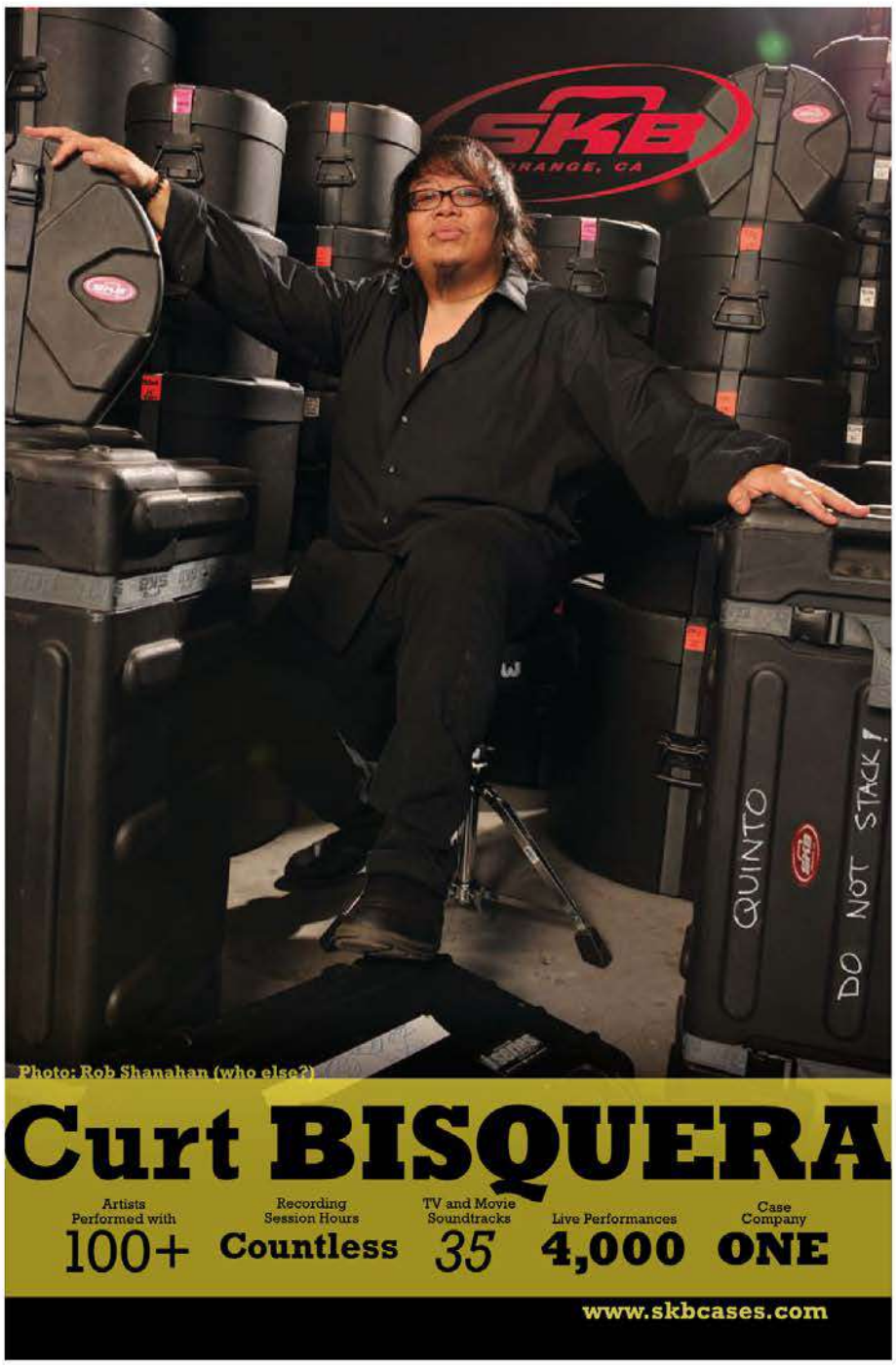
A few years ago, I was working with Colbie Caillat on her first record, *Coco*, which has the hit "Bubbly." We started going back to a dense, lower-pitched snare. The album was very minimalistic—just guitar, bass, drums, and keys. Picking warmer kinds of sounds helped complete a vibe on the record. In contrast, on the first Avril Lavigne record, *Let Go*, which was more rock, I knew I'd need an open-sounding kit.

Loving songs, if anything, is the key. By not being a schooled "chops" drummer, my focus has always been to listen to the song and find what's going to make it speak. When it comes to drums, a lot of the time it's not about being noticed, it's about making everything feel good. And that's what I loved about the guys I listened to growing up. I loved Ringo, Greg Errico from Sly and the Family Stone, and James Gadson, who played with Bill Withers and tons of other people. These guys just made everything feel good. Unless you were a drummer, you might not even notice what they were doing, but it felt great. That was the school I came from. I wasn't going to be the chops guy. I wanted to play with other people, be part of the team, and make everything feel great.

MD: Does playing on someone's record generally lead to an invitation to go on tour?

Victor: More often than not—although I did go and audition for the Beck gig. For Sheryl Crow, I had played on the record, and while we were making it, she asked us all to tour. With Alanis Morissette, I didn't play on her previous record, but I did play on this latest one, *Havoc and Bright Lights*, which led to the recent tour.

I like to switch it up and go out on the road every couple years if I can, and then stay home awhile and do records. I'm lucky in that respect. A lot of guys are either-or. If I've been doing records



for a year or two, sometimes it might drive me a little batty and it can feel like I'm playing on the same record over and over, so it's nice to get out on the road. There's a different energy you get from playing live than you do recording. I love doing both, and I love the fact that I can switch from one to the other.

When I was younger I'd get asked to be in bands. These days, when I go on tour it's usually with a solo artist, so there usually isn't an opportunity to become a permanent band member. And at this stage in my career I'm not sure I'd want to be in a band. As a session guy, I've been very lucky that I've gotten to do so many different kinds of music, and I'm not sure I'd want to give that up to do one thing. I haven't been pigeonholed into just one type of music. I feel very fortunate in that regard.

MD: When you're asked to tour with a major artist, what is your approach to handling the existing catalog?

Victor: When playing for well-known artists, representing the signature elements in their music is what separates the boys from the men. If there's a big fill on the record, when someone comes to the concert they want to hear that big fill, because it's what they know and love. Picking and choosing those parts is important. So when I'm listening to a song, I'm thinking, *This is what's standing out to me, so maybe I should be true to that.* That's not to say you can't add your own vibe in there too, but knowing when something needs to be represented is crucial.

The hi-hat sound on Alanis's song "Thank U" is such a big part of that recording and sticks out so much; when playing it in concert we used a loop of the original sound, and I played as well. So it really comes across as being the authentic sound. But with Alanis we tried to not be too reliant on loops. We set up the tour so that even if the computer went down, we'd be able to keep going. As good as technology is nowadays, something is always bound to go wrong. The more foolproof we could set ourselves up, the better. We even rehearsed scenarios of how we'd make up for the missing loops if those tracks went out, so we were pretty prepared.

Loops can be such a big part of a song's signature. Making friends with loops and finding your way and your space with them is very important. I really got to learn a lot about working with loops in '99, when I played with Beck. I learned so much from playing with that guy and that band, because there were tons of loops going on. I found it important to focus on making the song feel good and not too rigid.

MD: You've played on a number of movie scores and soundtracks, and you even appeared in *Get Him to the Greek*. How did you expand into that business?

Victor: I got into doing movie scores through Lyle Workman, who was the guitarist for Beck when I was playing with him. Lyle had gotten into doing movie scores, and he called me up to work with him. The funny thing that's happening recently in scores is that to stay current they're mimicking the

times, so they'll have scores that are sounding more like rock bands, or at least parts of the score will be rocking. Scores are interesting for me because they're not like anything else. They're nothing like a record, and they're nothing like playing live. They're their own thing, and they're pretty exciting.

The first score I did with Lyle was *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*. He got on a roll from that movie and did *Superbad*, *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, and then *Get Him to the Greek*, which was a unique one because they also wanted it to have its own soundtrack, which made for a longer process. They were writing and recording songs long before the movie had even started filming. It was a super-fun project because we got to pretend we were this band, Infant Sorrow, which appears in the movie. So not only did I get to play on the score, I played on the soundtrack as well.

One thing about scores is that you have to be able to read music. Not being a schooled drummer, I had to relearn how to read. I was in band in junior high for a minute, so I learned a little bit about reading. When I first started getting calls for movie scores, I would just be honest with the composers and tell them, "Hey, I'm not a great reader. Can you send me the chart and an MP3 so I can look over it?" That was a few years ago, and now just from doing it more often I've become a better reader.

Initially it was that same kind of nervousness that I had when learning to play to a click. I knew that the more I could relax, the better I was going to do. I'm getting my reading together more and more. Just in the last couple weeks I've been sight-reading things and I don't feel like I'm in a panic anymore. I wish I'd learned to sight-read sooner. It leads to so many different kinds of work.

The beautiful thing about music is that there's always room to get better, to work on different kinds of things and expand what you do and what you know. I've tried to find guys that I can take lessons from, even now. It's important for me to keep honing what I do and try to get better and better.

MD: Now that so much music is being downloaded these days, has the lack of physical albums impacted your name recognition?

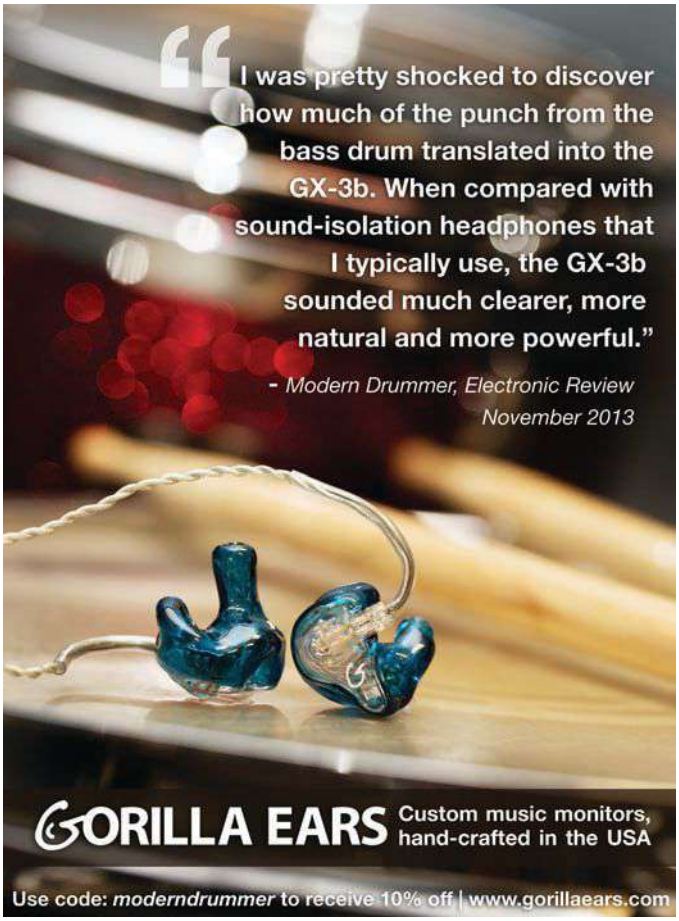
Victor: I think technology has definitely hurt knowing who played on an album. When I was growing up, I read the album notes, and I knew who played on everything, because it was right in front of me. And now we don't have that. It's a drag that the information isn't presentable to people like it used to be.

These days, people that are in the know, like producers here in Los Angeles, will know who I am. Your average kid buying a record now might not have any idea who I am, though. It's a sad thing to me, because I look at the generations of session drummers going back to guys like Hal Blaine and Jeff Porcaro, and the people who care about those guys are other drummers and

other musicians—and their stories aren't known outside of that group. And then you take my generation of session guys, and we will be even less known than the previous generations, because of technology.

MD: Do you wish more people knew who you are?

Victor: Yes and no. To some degree, session drummers have always been unknown. I just discovered Steve Miller's drummer Gary Mallaber, who was a session guy in the '70s. He was kind of a lesser-known guy. I was at a session and I was playing one of the Steve Miller licks and thinking, *That was so great. Who was that guy?* We looked it up, and it was Gary Mallaber. And then I saw all these records that he played on that were just part of my subconscious because I grew up listening to them. He played on Eddie Money and Bruce Springsteen records—tons of stuff that was part of my vocabulary without my even knowing it. I wrote him an email, saying, "Man, you're amazing. Thank you for all the stuff you've done." But I think that's also just part of being a session guy. There's an unsung-hero part to it, always. People aren't often going to know your name, and that doesn't bother me so much. I never wanted to be a lead singer—I just wanted to play drums. And I've been pretty happy with where it's taken me.



CHOPS BUILDERS

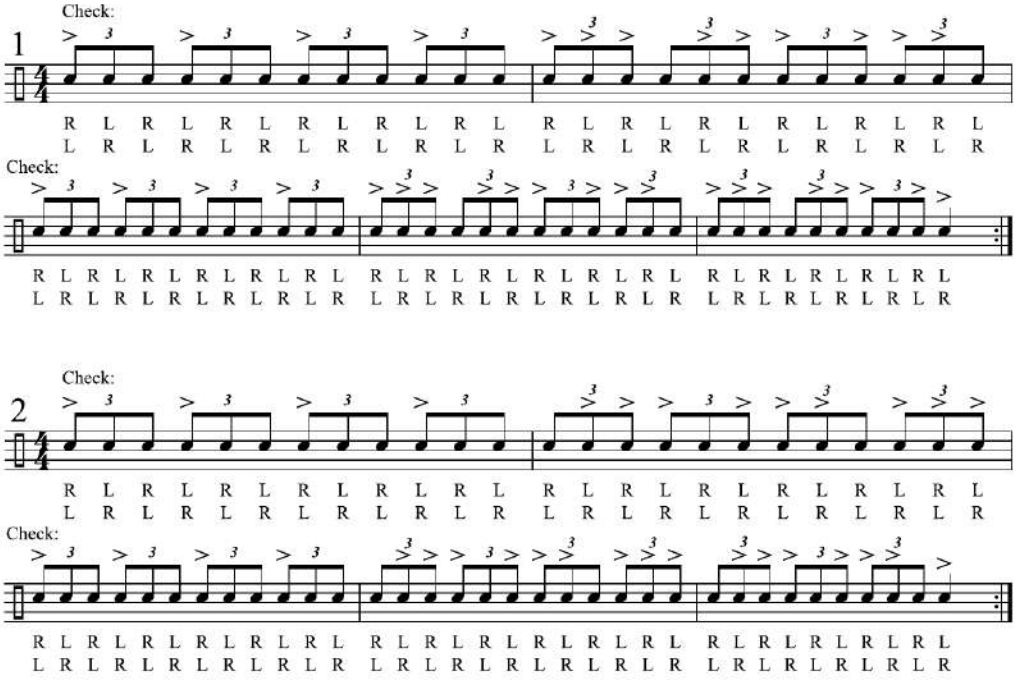
Hemiolas, Part 3

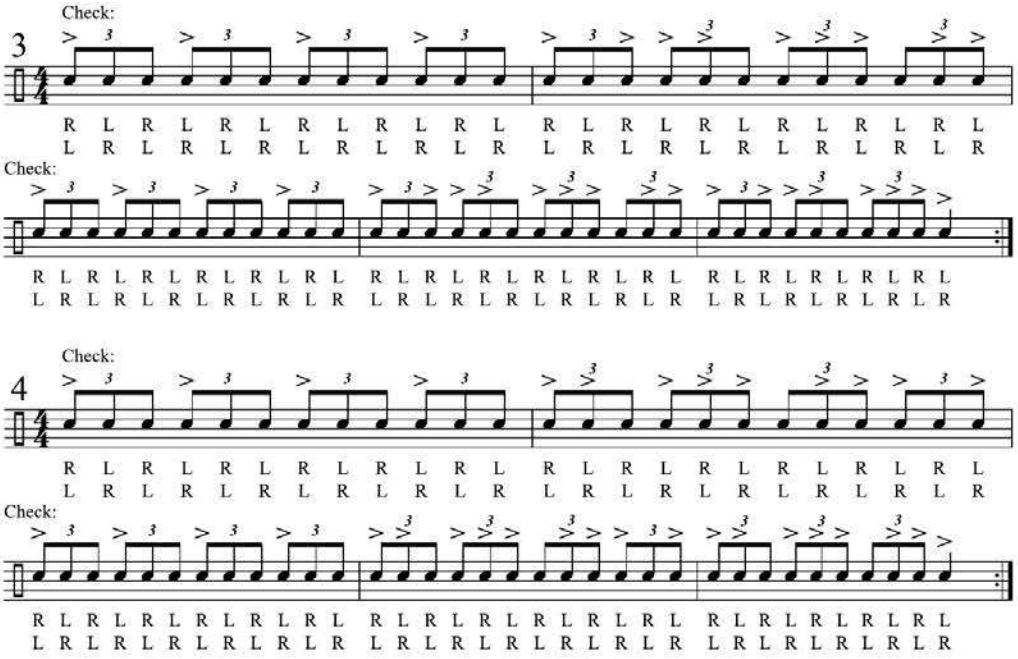
by Bill Bachman

In this final installment of our hemiola series, we're going to add yet another accent to the half-note-triplet patterns we covered in parts one and two. Part one had one accented note within the three groupings of four 8th-note triplets, and part two had two adjacent notes accented within the triplets. Now we'll accent three adjacent notes and move them to the four different starting positions.

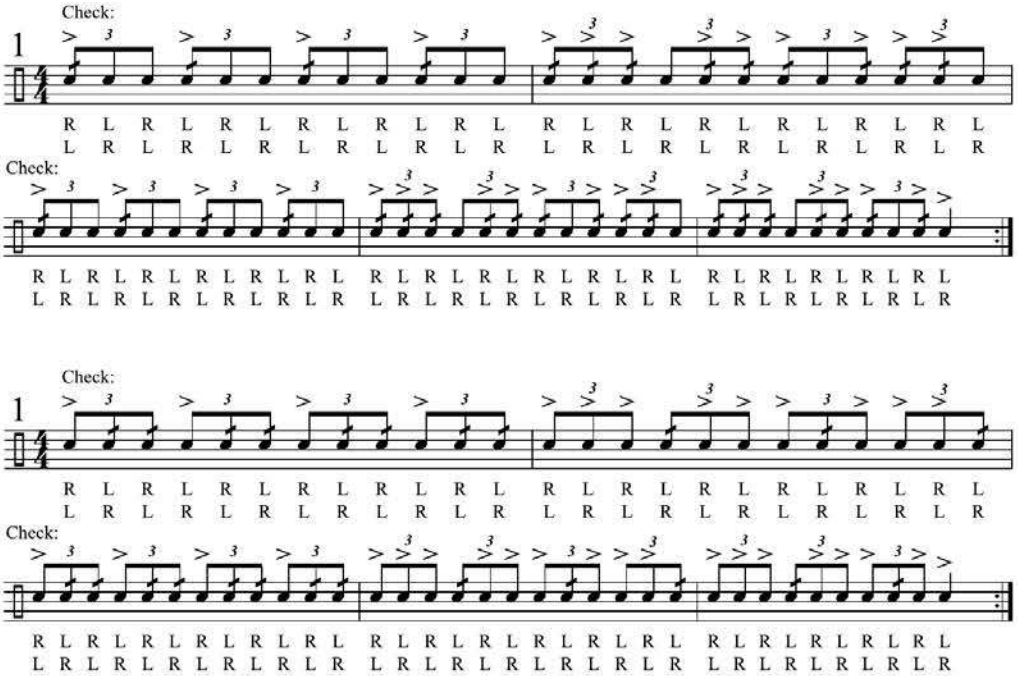
As always, it's imperative that you understand the relation of the quarter-note pulse to these accent patterns every step of the way. Only once you've internalized the rhythms to the point where you can comfortably count quarter notes out loud and groove to them will they be of any use in a musical situation.

Since the accents now outnumber the taps, you will be using more loose, rebounding free strokes (or full strokes) than in the previous parts. When you're accenting three notes within a four-note grouping, one hand will need to play continuous free strokes while the other plays alternating downstrokes and upstrokes. It's crucial that the hand playing continuous free strokes does so with a natural flow—no extra tension! At the same time, it's important that the hand playing the upstroke/downstroke combination plays an accent that matches the other hand in terms of stick height and velocity, and that the tap is played low and lightly for maximum contrast. Don't average out the stick heights, the stroke velocity, or the amount of squeezing between the two hands. The downstroke must be played strictly, with a brief moment of squeezing, while all of the other notes are played as loosely as possible. Take your time to learn each pattern very slowly, and pay careful attention to the stroke type noted above each note (F = full, D = down, T = tap, and U = up). Practice the exercises along with a metronome or recorded music, and make sure that you can comfortably tap your foot and count quarter notes out loud while playing.





As in the previous two articles, we're now going to explore roll variations, first by playing diddles (double strokes) on the accents and then by playing diddles on the low taps.



Mastering the hemiola accent patterns presented in this series will do amazing things for your understanding of triplet partials. Triplet-based "rhythmic Illusions" will no longer throw you off, plus your own vocabulary will have greatly expanded. Internalize the exercises through a massive number of perfect repetitions, and then don't be surprised when they show up in your own creative stream-of-consciousness explorations behind the kit.

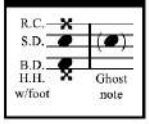
Bill Bachman is an international drum clinician, the author of *Stick Technique* (Modern Drummer Publications), and the founder of drumworkout.com. For more information, including how to sign up for online lessons, visit billbachman.net.

FUNK DRUMMING TRAINING CAMP

Part 6: Changing Subdivisions

by Mike Adamo

MUSIC KEY



In the previous five parts of this series, we discussed the importance of being able to play a tight, solid groove with a good feel. In this final installment, we'll focus on things that are more complex than what you'll often play on a gig. While that may seem counterintuitive, practicing concepts that require a lot of coordination and concentration will expand the boundaries of your drumming so that even if you're just playing a basic funk groove, you'll deliver it with a much higher level of control and confidence.

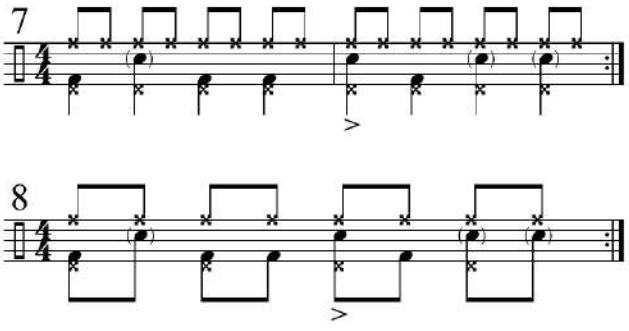
As in the previous articles, this lesson focuses on playing paradiddles between the bass drum and snare in conjunction with a steady ride pattern. This time, however, we'll be phrasing the paradiddles using different rhythmic subdivisions, including quarter notes, 8ths, 8th-note triplets, 16ths, 16th-note triplets, and 32nd notes. These exercises will work wonders in terms of increasing your coordination and improving your internal clock. They'll also strengthen your control of bass drum/snare interaction, and focusing on emphasizing the difference between the accents and the ghost notes in the snare patterns will help your development of dynamics.

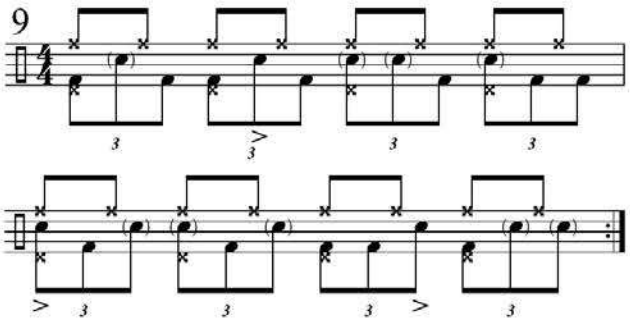
To begin, let's start with a quarter-note ride pattern. It's a good idea to play quarter notes with the left foot on the hi-hat as well, to help you lock in with your metronome. Here's the first set of exercises.

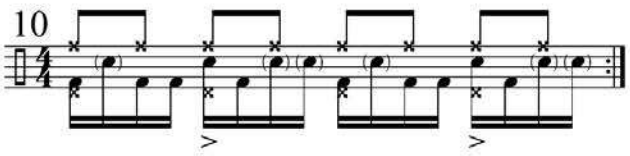
Start slowly, and master each exercise before moving on. It's best to practice all of these at 40 bpm or slower while starting out. You'll notice that some of the patterns are two bars long, while some are only one. This is because applying a paradiddle to some of the rhythmic subdivisions, such as quarter notes and 8th-note triplets, requires two measures to resolve back to beat 1. Practicing these patterns will help you become more aware of the spaces between the notes in order to smooth out your time feel.

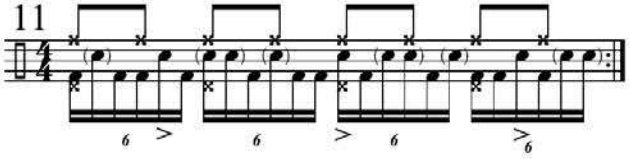
Once you have the individual patterns down, play each one twenty times and then move on to the next without stopping. Try to go through all six variations four times in a row (twenty times each) for a really nice groove workout. You can also play through all six variations in a row with no repeats. This will force you to think and react quicker, as you won't have time to get used to any particular subdivision.

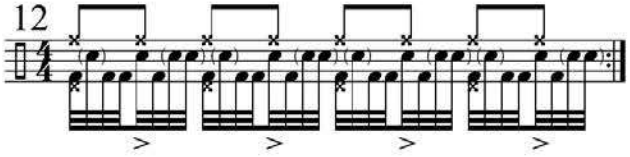
After you've mastered the first set of exercises, begin to experiment with different ride patterns. Here's what the paradiddle variations look like with a steady 8th-note ride.





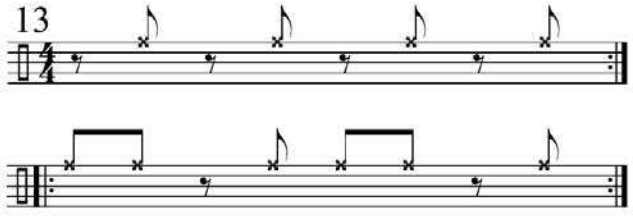




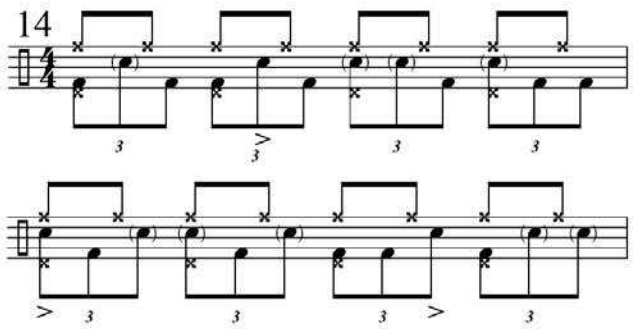


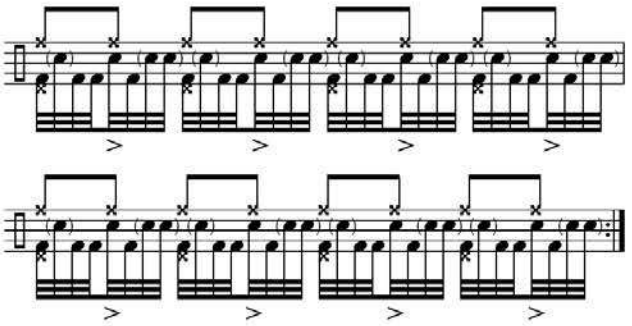
If you're having trouble with any exercise, break it down. Start by playing just the first note, and then gradually add one note at a time until you can play the entire pattern.

Here are a few other ride patterns that I like to use in conjunction with this lesson.

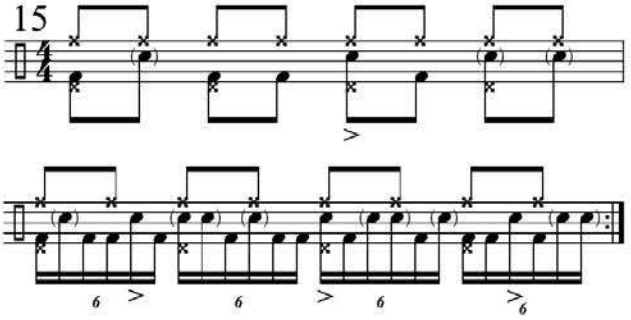


You can also combine rhythmic patterns to challenge yourself further. I like to mix patterns that have a big difference in rhythmic subdivisions. For example, try playing 8th-note triplets for two measures, and then switch to 32nd notes for two measures.





Another option is to use 8th-note subdivisions for a measure and then switch to 16th-note triplets.



You can also combine different subdivisions within the context of one beat of the measure. The following example uses 16th-note subdivisions for the first half of each beat and 32nd-note subdivisions for the second half.

The previous three examples are great for developing your internal clock, because they force you to quickly change the rate at which you're subdividing the beat. That way, you're not just on autopilot. While you're practicing, try counting quarter notes or 8th notes out loud in order to further ingrain the pulse.

You can also increase the coordination value of this lesson by adding steady or offbeat 8th notes with the left foot on the hi-hat. For bonus exercises, repeat all of the examples using the three different inversions of the paradiddle.

Work on these ideas for a few weeks, and you'll notice a big improvement in your timing, internal clock, control, dynamics, groove, and feel.

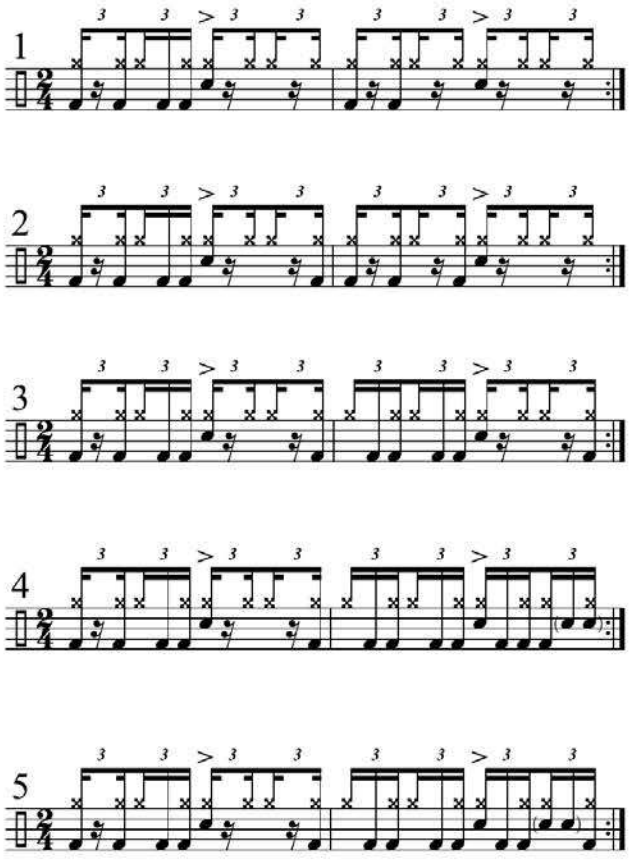
Mike Adamo is the author of the critically acclaimed instructional book *The Breakbeat Bible* (Hudson Music). For more info, including how to sign up for lessons via Skype, visit mikeadamo.com and thebreakbeatbible.com.

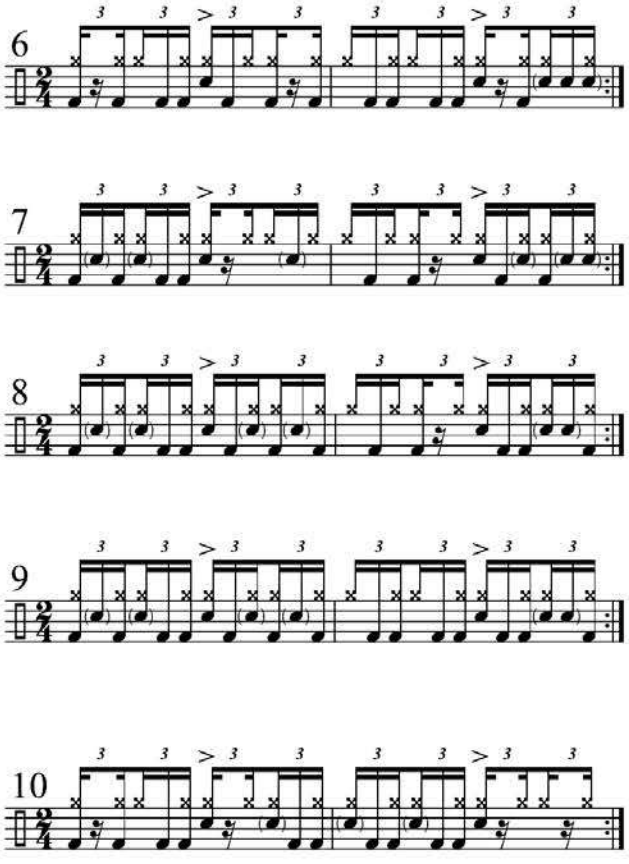
BEMBE-INSPIRED HALF-TIME SHUFFLES

10 Ways to Add an Afro-Cuban Inflection

by Andy Shoniker

The original inspiration for these patterns came courtesy of Brady Blade's wonderful groove on the tune "So Damn Lucky" from Dave Matthews' 2003 solo album, *Some Devil* (see Example 1), and the parts have roots in traditional rhythms found in Afro-Caribbean bembe music. Each example gets progressively more involved in the snare and bass drum. Take the patterns slowly, and always make sure to settle into a groove. Once you have the mechanics down, try changing the hi-hat to 8th notes.





Andy Shoniker is a professional musician living in Toronto. He's a graduate of Berklee College of Music and endorses SJC drums, Paiste cymbals, Vater drumsticks, and Evans drumheads. He is also the creator of the Rhythm Trainer app. For more information, visit andyshoniker.com.

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DOUBLE BASS WORKOUT

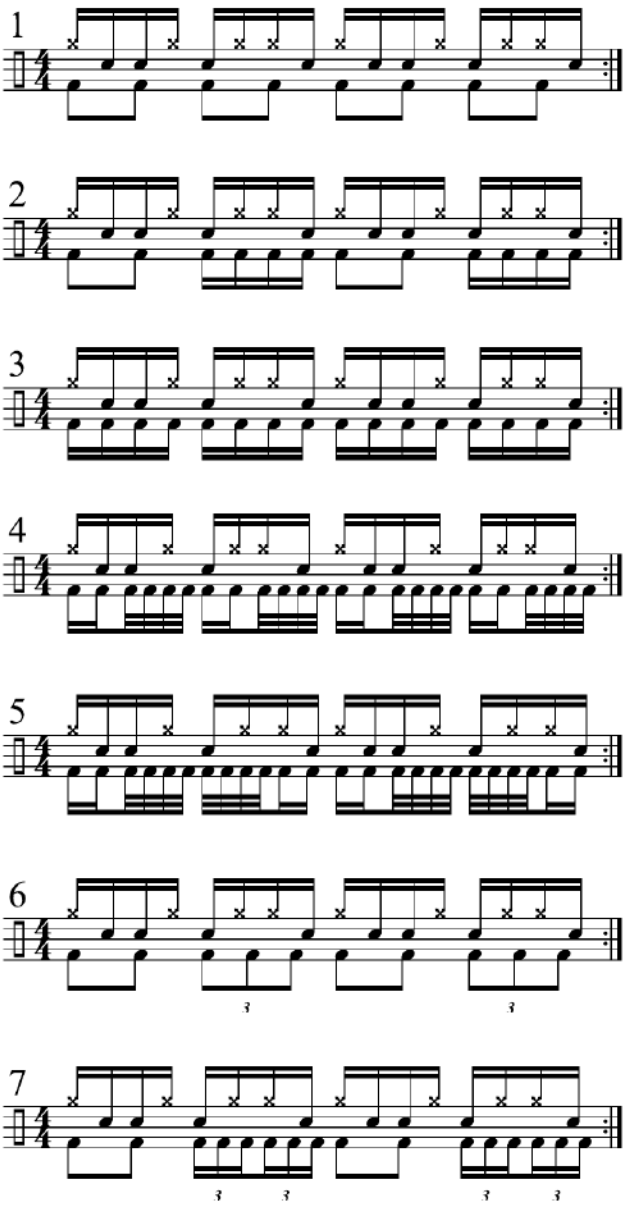
Part 5: Paradiddle-Based Hand Patterns

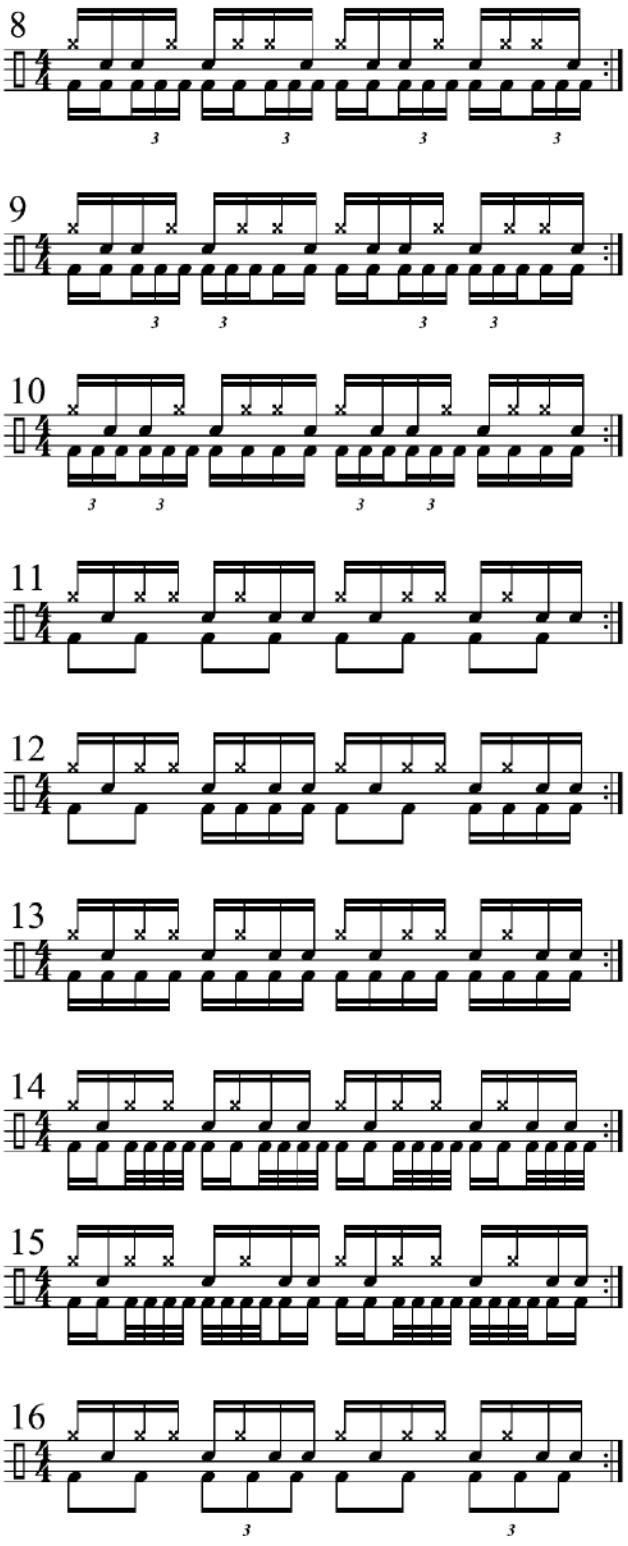
by Todd Vinciguerra

MUSIC KEY

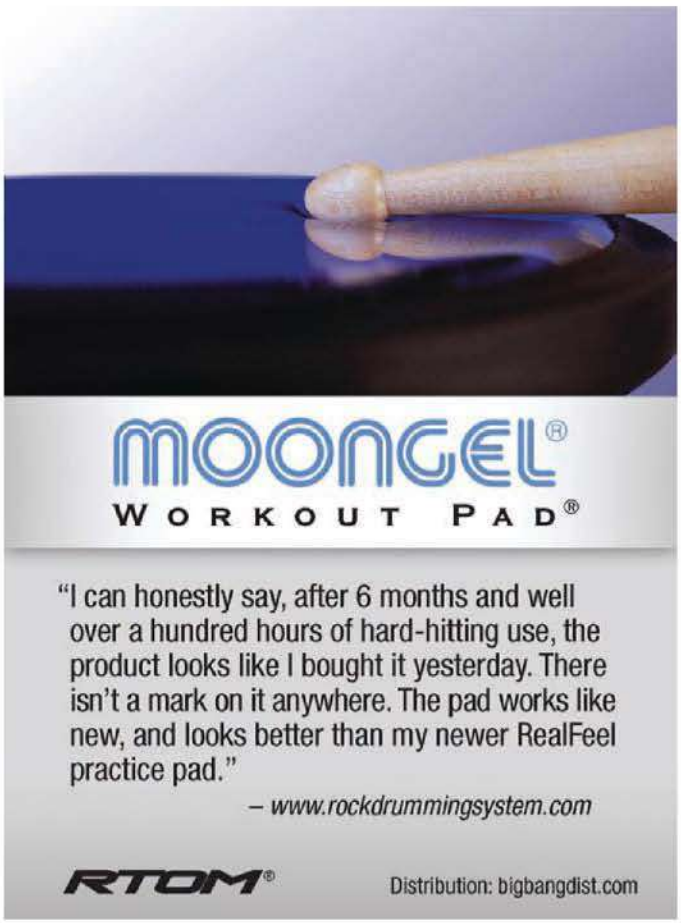
H.H.
S.D.
B.D.

In this lesson we'll explore double bass groove ideas that incorporate paradiddle-based hand patterns. Remember to play to a metronome or click track, and start off slowly and master each exercise before increasing the speed. To take the exercises a step further, turn them into two- or four-bar repeating phrases. The bass drum patterns can be played leading with either foot, or even with double strokes. Experiment, and have fun!





Todd "Vinny" Vinciguerra is the author of several drum instructional books. His latest, *Double Basics: Complete Double Bass Drum Book*, is available through Mel Bay. For more info, visit anotherstateofmind.com.



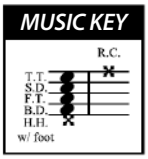
STICK CONTROL REVISITED

Part 3: 5/4 Variations

by Steve Fidyk

DIGITALLY ENHANCED moderndrummer.com

MUSIC KEY

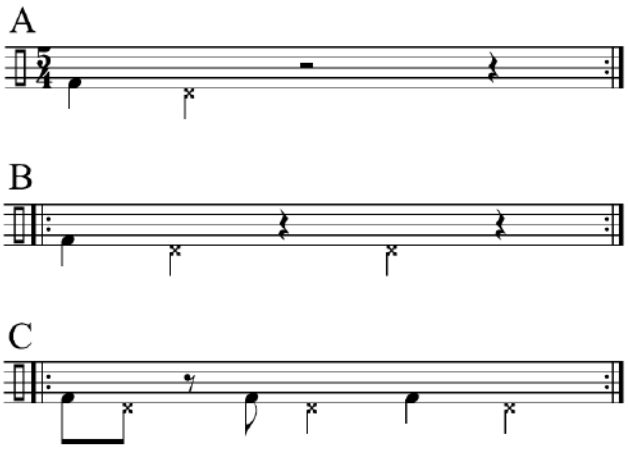


Welcome to the third installment in our series on drumset applications of George Lawrence Stone's classic book *Stick Control*. The following variations utilize the "72 Single Beat Combinations" found on pages 5–7.

Let's begin by reading each *Stick Control* sticking pattern around the kit while swinging the 8th-note rhythms in 5/4. Below is Example 22 from page 5.

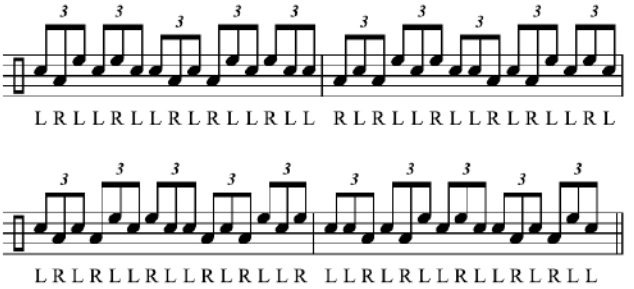
Ex. 22:

Next, add the following bass drum and hi-hat rhythms to accompany the hands.



Once you have control of the previous patterns, choose another example from *Stick Control*, and try reading the stickings as 8th-note triplets. Here's Example 34 from page 6. As you practice reading the stickings in triplet form, play four measures of time between examples.

Ex. 34:

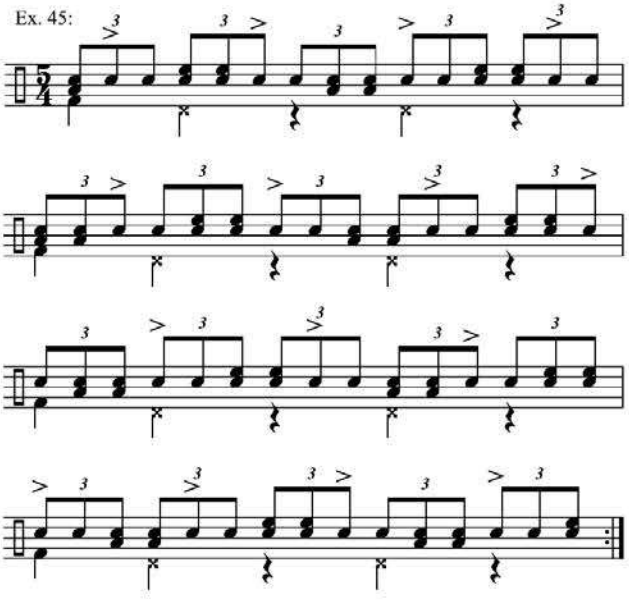

L R L L R L L R L R L L R L L R L

Here's Example 54 from page 7 utilizing ostinato pattern A.

Ex. 54:

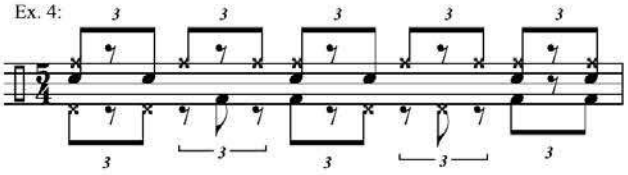
Next, try playing ostinato pattern D while reading each R from *Stick Control* in triplet form. Below is Example 45 from page 6.

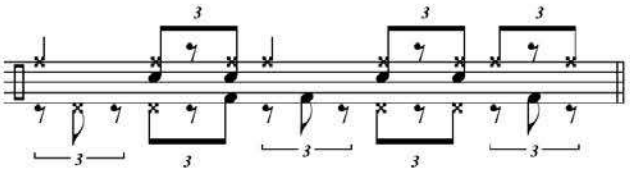
Ex. 45:



You can also try playing the single-beat combinations with your feet, as quarter-note triplets, while reading each L sticking on the snare. Below is Example 4 from page 5.

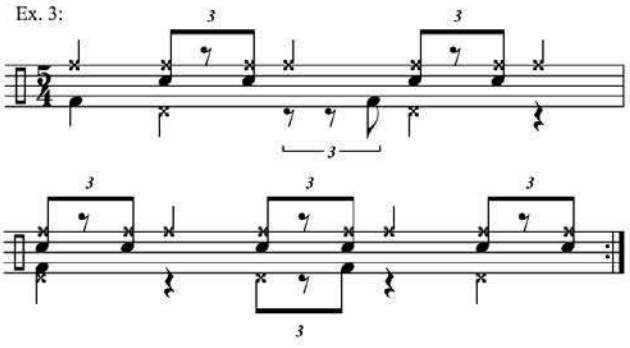
Ex. 4:





Finally, try swinging each L sticking on the snare while playing a polyrhythm of five over two between your ride cymbal and bass drum. Below is Example 3 from page 5.

Ex. 3:



Steve Fidyk has performed with Terell Stafford, Tim Warfield, Dick Oatts, Doc Severinsen, Wayne Bergeron, Phil Wilson, and Maureen McGovern, and he's a member of the jazz studies faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia. For more info, including how to sign up for lessons via Skype, visit stevefidyk.com.

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You're Really Good...For a Girl

Drum-biz insider **Juels Thomas** contemplates how far our community has come on the topic of gender politics. Though she finds a healthy range of opinions on the subject, there's much agreement that the music must always come first.

I've been a drummer for as long as I can remember. It's my dad's fault. Technically, I started playing when I was about five years old. My dad would sit me on his lap and work the pedals while I got down to business on the hi-hat and snare. Eventually he showed me how to play along to records. In fact, I've never lived in a house without a drumset. I realize now how lucky that is. For me, though, it's just normal.

It never even really occurred to me that I was a female drummer, and now specifically a female in the drum industry. But I recently saw an interview with the COO of a Fortune 500 company, who happens to be a woman, and it got me thinking. She said that she sometimes feels ashamed of her success because she was taught that women were supposed to be in the background and not flaunt their achievements. She was even told that she should "stop being smart" around boys or they wouldn't like her. I felt sorry for her for believing this.

First of all, if someone feels the need to dumb herself down to attract a partner or friend, what happens after that? Is she supposed to pretend to be less than her potential for the rest of her life in order to keep that relationship going? Second, if you work hard and are proud of what you do, why shouldn't you take credit for it? I can't imagine anyone telling a man to chill out on his intelligence and determination.

Obviously the main challenge is how we deal with other people's perceptions of us. Sarah Hagan, artist relations manager at Zildjian, has encountered her share of obstacles throughout her career as a drummer and an executive. But she realizes that we can control only our own actions and attitude. "I've never felt ashamed or pretended to be less of anything," Sarah says. "If someone feels threatened, that's an issue within that person and has nothing to do with me. I always want to be myself, and I hope that others appreciate me for what I am."

Like most precocious children who believe they will grow up to be a pilot, firefighter, and marine biologist all at the same time, I had multiple goals that I just knew I was going to accomplish in my life: to walk on the moon, be knighted by the Queen of England, and play on a Stanley Cup–winning team. Aside from someone once pointing out that I am not a citizen of England, no one ever discouraged me or told me that those are things only men should do. Or if they did, I failed to notice.

As the drummer and teacher Dawn Richardson (4 Non Blondes, Mental 99, Tracy Chapman) remembers, "When I started playing, I don't think I even gave it a second thought that I was a minority or that it was unusual for a girl to play the drums. When kids are really little they all play together and don't notice the differences between each other. It's not until they get a bit older or when an adult points it out. I just liked playing music and learning the drums, and it made me feel good."

We are not naïve, however. There are certainly times when female drummers aren't given a chance or at least are unintentionally overlooked. Female comedians have to deal with this too. Someone will say, "Wow, you're really *awesome*...for a girl." Those people think they're giving a great compliment, so it's hard to be angry at them. But we've all encountered small prejudices like that—and much harsher—along the way. Even now, when I'm teching for someone, at least one guy will inevitably say something like, "Dang, why are they making you do all the work?" Because this is my *job*. That question is just as perplexing to me as if I were in the hospital being treated by a male nurse and I said to him, "Why don't you let one of the ladies handle this? You should be off playing professional sports instead."

Clockwise from bottom right: Juels Thomas, Sarah Hagan, Yael, and Dawn Richardson

Yael (the Love Project, Ugly Kid Joe, Divinity Roxx) has had similar experiences. "When you hear the same thing over and over," she says, "such as 'Don't take this the wrong way, but you don't play like a girl' or 'I had to get way closer to the stage because I didn't believe you were a female,' I choose to react with a simple 'Thank you.' But in my mind it's usually 'Thank you...I guess.'"

As much as I personally believe gender is a nonissue, I'm aware that female drummers are still an oddity. But I don't mean that in a derogatory way. I think it's

a compliment! Honestly, if you're going on an audition and you're the only girl out of forty guys, that's an advantage. You automatically stand out and have intrigue on your side. Even before you play, you can usually get a sense from the body language of the people auditioning you, saying, "Well, all right! This is already interesting!"

Other times it can take some convincing. "A lot of assumptions come from years of auto-pilot reactions to humans viewing a female sitting at the drum throne," Yael observes. "But personally I never gave much attention or weight to that Negative Nelly attitude."

Richardson has noticed the divide too. "Of course, I was born a female," she says, "so I can't really know what it would be like to be a guy, how different it might feel or if my spectrum of opportunity may have been different were I born male. I do know that identifying gender is a pretty important aspect. Our culture has concepts of what that might entail, and usually if you don't fit them, you are considered somewhat different."

Jeff Gracianette

Ken Tomabe

The administrative side of the music business is also still very male oriented. But I personally don't feel uncomfortable here. Having been in this environment so long, it doesn't faze me. I never thought there was any reason to count the men and women in the room, as long as we're all taking care of business. Hagan agrees. "I don't really think of myself as a female in my line of work," she says. "I'm not a woman doing my job; I'm just doing my job. I want to be judged on the work I do, regardless of my gender."

The one consensus I've found in my travels is that everyone would like to see more females behind the kit, though it's hard to tell if the approaches to reach women are hitting the mark so far. It's not realistic to think that marketing and role models will suddenly turn every girl into a drummer. Some girls like motorcycles, some don't; that doesn't come from marketing. But certainly, the more we see ladies out there, the more it reinforces that this is not strange. It's more about presenting the concept as a perfectly reasonable, attainable, and common option.

If the focus is on male versus female, it only highlights differences. When a campaign suggests, "Check out this girl—she can really rock too!" there's a danger of coming off condescending and only widening the divide. When I was a kid, nobody had to point out to me that Karen Carpenter was a woman. It didn't even need to be said. Anyway, that wasn't a significant detail to me regarding her drumming career. Because, if you think about it in the reverse, it's just as absurd. Nobody singled out her brother/bandmate, Richard, and said, "Wow, that guy plays piano? How weird!"

Ultimately, we all just want to be accepted as peers. Richardson remembers how that felt in high school. "Drums and music are interesting in that it was a competition for chair position," she recalls, "but then we all needed to get along and make music together and be a team. So more than being 'better than the boys,' I think I wanted to be 'one of the boys.' I wanted to fit in and be on the team."

Dawn also promotes the idea of showing drummers in all shapes and sizes. "I think it's great for all of us to see as much diversity as possible in the field that we might want to pursue. If you only see one type of person as a drummer, that might discourage certain people from drumming. Though I don't think I had many female role models as drummers, I still managed to stay with the drums and excel. So at this point in my life I'm hoping my existence and the fact that I'm able to do this is a good example for some younger folks to see."

In recent years, there seems to have been an influx of contests and magazines specifically aimed toward female drummers. While it's definitely positive to see more of an outlet for us now, there can be a fine line between reaching out to a group and segregating. We are at a point of progress in music, for sure. But perhaps soon there won't be a need for targeting to specific groups.

Hagan is happy that we have these options now. "I think that anything that encourages more participation and involvement in drumming and music is a good thing," Sarah says. "If there are girls out there who feel more comfortable in an environment with other girls, and it will get them to play, then I say it's a benefit to the industry."

Richardson agrees. "I think that more visibility is better, so if it takes contests and magazines to shine a light on more female drummers, so be it. While I have mixed feelings about separating out women and girls, I feel that females are underrepresented in traditional music media."

Yael shares some conflict with the presentation, however. "I am sure the intention of most of the females trying to inspire other girls is to have a feminist-type strategy, and they aren't looking to put anyone down, but it's all part of the game. Stop separating humans due to gender. I'm a drummer. I am female. The end."

None of this is to say that we should all be androgynous and ignore our inherent differences. Be who you are, of course! But please don't believe it if people try to imply that what you do is unusual or they don't expect you to be as good as you are. As Yael puts it, "Music is the one channel of freedom that can disconnect us from the game. It's actually fun once the shift happens. Nobody cares if you're big, small, round, dark, have big feet, etc. They see *you* by hearing and feeling you. Music transcends."

Drew Willingham

***Juels Thomas** is the education and events manager for Drum Workshop.*

Juan "Carlito" Mendoza

Alex Solca

Sometimes you have to get frustrated to get better. Guitar Center's 2012 Drum-Off winner says he had to push past some uninspiring clinics and drum-battle near misses to finally get to the top.

by Anthony "Tiny" Biuso

In the weeks leading up to the 2012 Guitar Center Drum-Off Grand Finals, Juan "Carlito" Mendoza thought a lot about his solo, planning and rehearsing it every day for hours on end. Mendoza, no stranger to the Drum-Off, made it to the Grand Finals in 2008 but lost that year to Jerome Flood. Before then he had advanced only to regional finals. But this year, Juan says, he was more determined and focused than ever, going over every aspect of his solo with a fine-tooth comb, including working on appearing "less robotic."

"When I looked back at my 2008 performance, I could tell I was just thinking too much," Mendoza says. "If I wanted to have a chance, I had to make it look and feel natural."

Another important change Mendoza identifies is the inclusion of a Roland Octapad in his performance. "Before I watched [2011 Drum-Off champ] JP Bouvet last year," he says, "I had no idea what could be done with the pad. So this year I stepped up my game. I'd never really used an Octapad, and I didn't own one, so I borrowed one from a student of mine and he showed me how to do it. People don't understand that we programmed all the loops and sounds in the pads. They think I'm just hitting the thing. Not the case. It took me *weeks* to get it right."

The time and attention Mendoza put in clearly paid off—his performance in the finals was nothing short of spectacular. Utilizing the Octapad every step of the way, Juan wowed the crowd with elements of rock, fusion, and Latin music. Demonstrating amazing technique and independence, he crafted a solo that easily earned him the victory.

Mendoza began with a difficult syncopated melody on the pads, followed by a tribute to Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean." Then he moved on to a left-foot-clave pattern and some incredible trickery utilizing a splash cymbal manipulated on top of the resonant side of the snare; the segment also saw him imitating DJ scratches by running his stick along the snare wires. Mendoza's salsa and Latin grooves were extremely tight and well thought-out, and his solo ended with a few well-placed double bass rhythms and rapid-fire snare flurries. The drummers in the crowd obviously loved the guy, as evidenced by the sight of them leaping to their feet at the conclusion of his performance.

Mendoza, who is thirty-two years old, drew early inspiration from his parents' record collection. (His mother, Elis, sings at a local church, and his father, Juan, plays guitar.) In middle school he studied with band director John Gronert, a former student of Joe Morello's who taught Juan the mechanics and basics of drumming. The young musician sharpened his skills by listening to recordings by Spyro Gyra and by Dave Weckl, his first major drumming influence. "I just couldn't fathom how someone could make the drumset sound like that," says Mendoza, who is currently pursuing his M.A. in music education while serving as the band director for the William C. McGinnis Middle School in his hometown of Perth Amboy, New Jersey.

Throughout his playing career, Mendoza has frequented drum clinics—in fact, that's where he says he was inspired to become a teacher. But his impetus came just as much from what he *wasn't* learning as what he was. "I would go to these clinics by these crazy cats," Juan recalls, "but they couldn't convey how to play their parts. I was like, 'Come *on*, man, show me how to play it!' I'm the type of guy who wants to know what's going on. And if somebody asks me a question about drumming, I want to be able to answer them."

Such attention to detail no doubt played a big part in Mendoza's being crowned the twenty-fourth Drum-Off winner, and in his career moving smoothly into a more serious phase. The drummer is now an official endorser of companies like DW, Meinl, Remo, and Vic Firth, and he's in the process of creating an affordable drum-lesson website.

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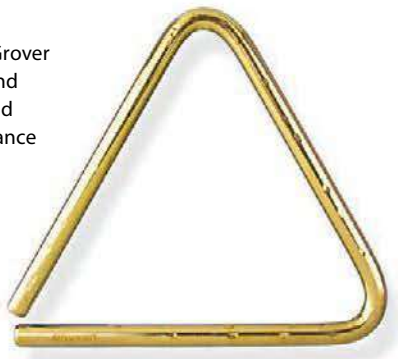

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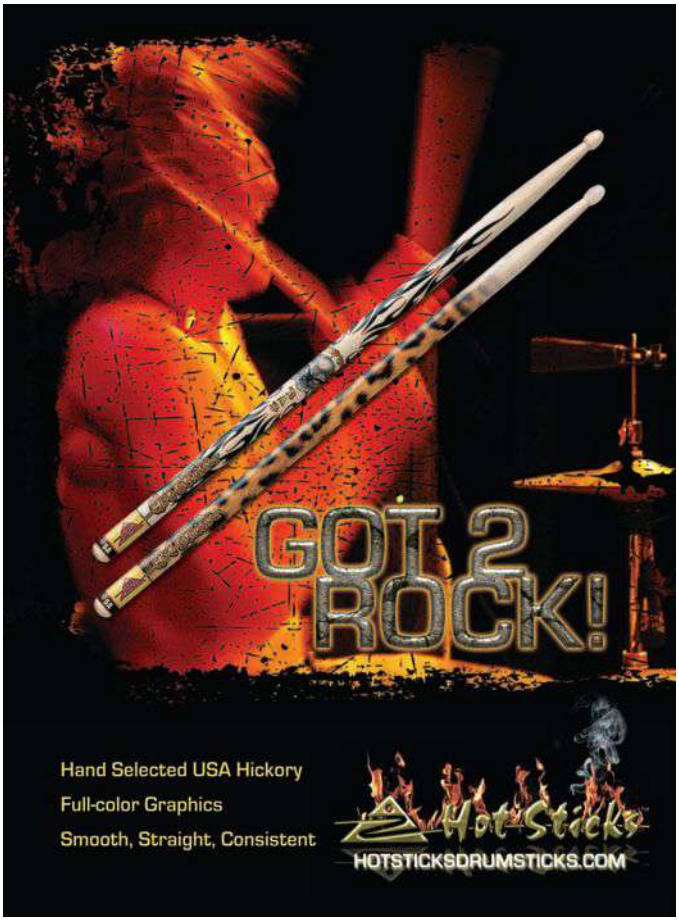

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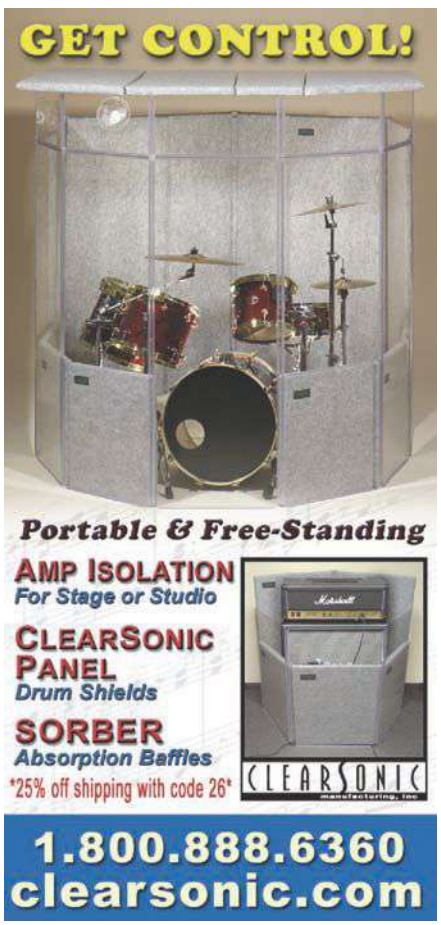

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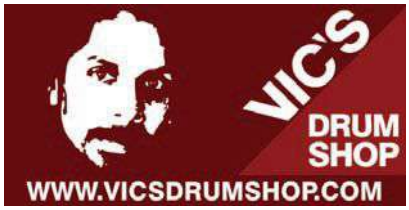

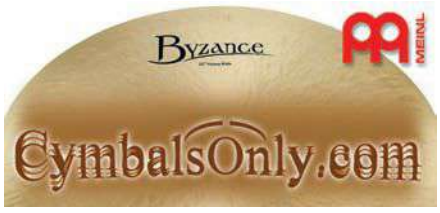

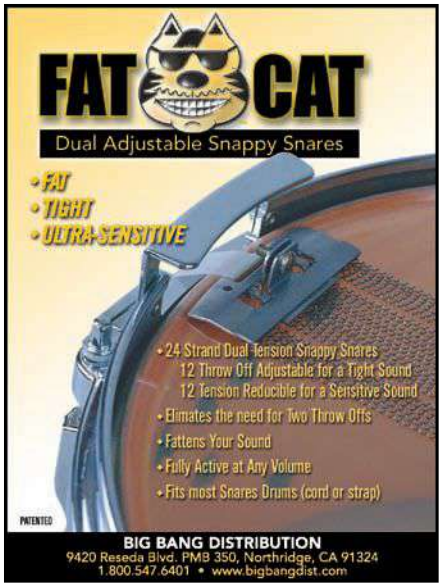

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WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT...?

Karen Carpenter

One of the most iconic vocalists in pop history was also a drummer—and a damned good one. So why do we still need reminding?

by Dena Tauriello

In a 1975 *Playboy* magazine readers poll, Karen Carpenter was voted the best rock drummer of the year—beating out Led Zeppelin's John Bonham. Clearly insulted, Bonzo quipped, "She couldn't last ten minutes with a Zeppelin number." Carpenter was more than capable on her instrument, though. So why did this strike such a chord? One must consider the gender factor. Let's face it: In the '70s women were not known for being drummers. It wasn't common—it wasn't even cool. Yet there was Karen Carpenter. At the time, no other female drummer had reached the same level of prominence or achieved as much worldwide acclaim. Yes, there was Maureen "Moe" Tucker of the groundbreaking Velvet Underground, but despite its long-lasting influence, the VU didn't come close to the commercial success of the Carpenters.

Carpenters Karen and Richard were the most successful American music act of the '70s. Karen is known first and foremost as the lead singer of the pop duo, delivering haunting and lush alto melodies on such smash hits as "(They Long to Be) Close to You", "We've Only Just Begun," "Top of the World," "Rainy Days and Mondays," and "Merry Christmas, Darling," to name but a few. Single and album sales in total exceed 100 million units. The music, particularly Karen's voice, is credited for having influenced many artists, including Madonna, Sheryl Crow, Kim Gordon, Shania Twain, and K.D. Lang. The focus on her lower register and the success it brought led Karen to jest by saying, "The money's in the basement." Notwithstanding her iconic sound and style, Carpenter always considered herself "a drummer who sang."

Richard was the brains of the operation, responsible for song selections, arrangements, production, even working with Karen on her phrasing, but his kid sister was the face and the voice. Perhaps Richard's most daunting task was telling Karen that she would no longer be the band's live drummer, shifting her role to

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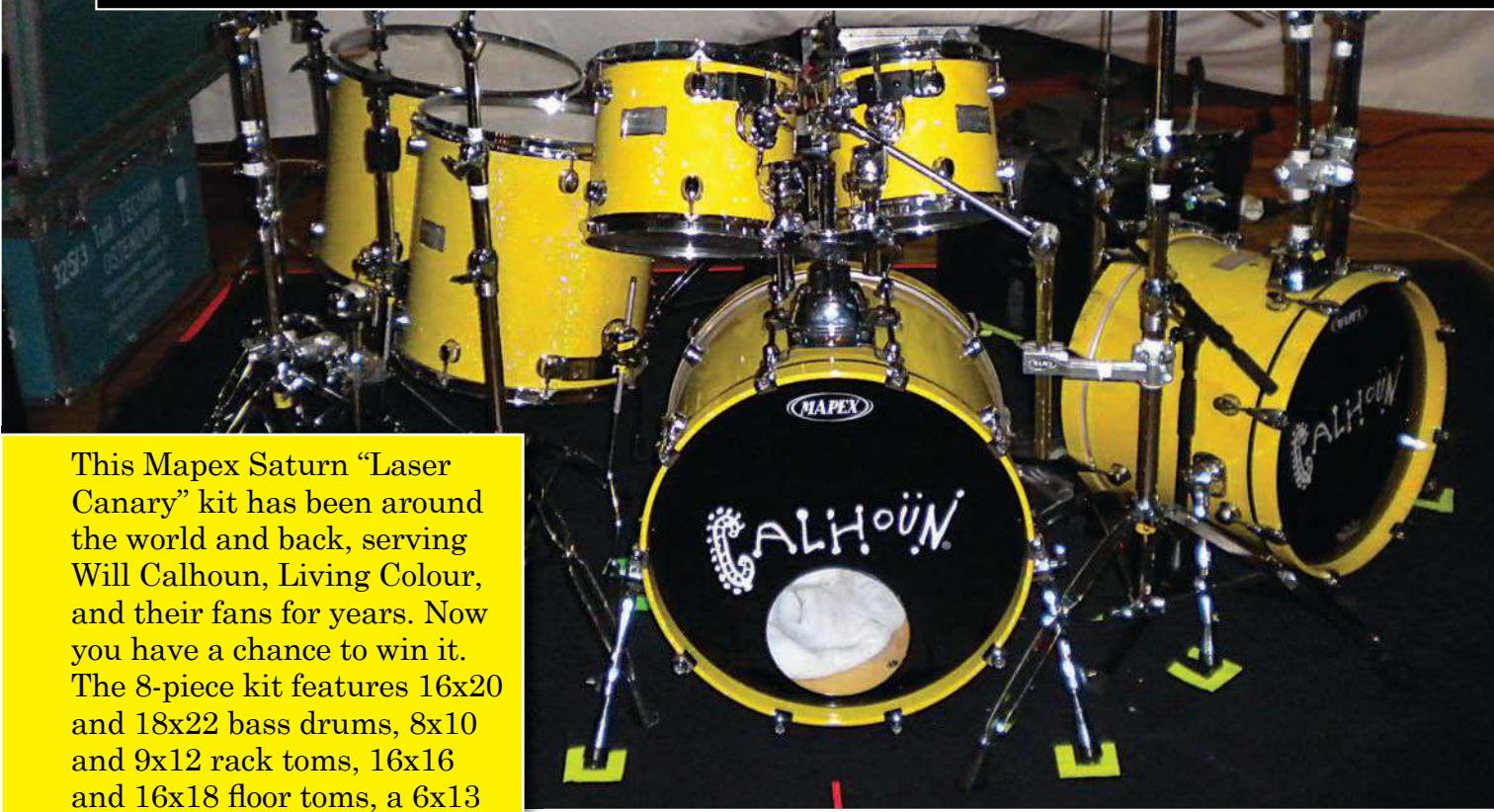

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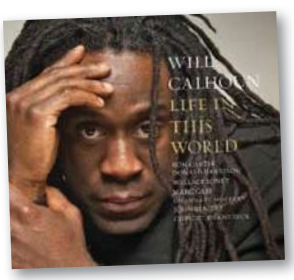

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lead singer. By now she had agreed to take a backseat on some of the recording sessions, with Hal Blaine playing on most of the singles released between 1970 and 1975. Karen played the album tracks on those six records, in addition to several singles, like "Sing," "Yesterday Once More," and "Please Mr. Postman." On the four albums released between 1976 and 1983, the drum tracks were played by Ron Tutt, Jim Gordon, Larrie Londin, Cubby O'Brien, John Robinson, or Ed Greene.

Karen and Richard Carpenter. Beneath their sunny disposition were complex emotions and a wellspring of instrumental talent.

Karen began drumming at age fifteen, fairly late in the game compared to many players, but this was her first passion and first serious instrument. Having grown up listening to a mix of rock and jazz, she was primarily influenced by Ringo Starr and Joe Morello, and she played both styles well. Karen had her first taste of drumming in her high school marching band, after coaxing drummer Frankie Chavez to let her switch from glockenspiel to snare drum. She then took lessons for about a year before transitioning out of the practice room and onto the stage. Karen drummed in various projects that also featured her brother, including Spectrum and the Richard Carpenter Trio, both of which performed a mix of original compositions and covers.

The siblings had worked for years with legendary Wrecking Crew bassist Joe Osborn, who played on nearly every track of every album released during the

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Carpenters' fourteen-year career. Early on, they cut a demo at Osborn's Magic Lamp studios, and Karen was signed to Magic Lamp Records. Having had no success there, Richard continued to shop their sound and material and eventually caught the ear of Herb Alpert, who signed them to his A&M label.

When Osborn was initially brought in to cut "Close to You," which would become the group's first number-one hit, he insisted on using Hal Blaine on drums. The two had already teamed up on many Wrecking Crew tracks and amassed an impressive résumé. The Carpenters were fans of many of those records and offered no objections.

In his autobiography, Blaine says he considers Karen to be "a great drummer." And as Randy L. Schmidt reports in *Yesterday Once More: The Carpenters Reader*, upon meeting Karen, Buddy Rich referred to her as "one of my favorite drummers." So why didn't she play on all the tracks? Osborn offers *MD* this explanation: "Karen was very good in the studio but lacked experience. Her feel was good, but she wasn't [physically] strong. Also, when building tracks, they began with just piano, bass, drums, and a scratch vocal; they couldn't track the vocal from behind the drums. She needed to be at the mic for the sake of the recording.

"But if there is such a thing as perfect time, she had it," Osborn adds, using the recording of "Yesterday Once More" as an example. "Richard didn't like the first half of the track and wanted to rerecord it. They were using 2" tape and no click track. He insisted they could recut the first half and splice it to the second half. I was very skeptical, but Richard insisted, so we recut it. There is no change in tempo and no way to know. The tempo matched perfectly. It was incredible."

Karen's natural ability was particularly evident in her effortless mastery of odd time signatures; she took to them after only a year of drumming. The band's first release, 1969's *Ticket to Ride* (originally titled *Offering*) is the only album showcasing Karen on drums throughout. The tenth track, "All I Can Do," is a presto 5/4 piece, where the Morello influence is most apparent. Karen moves through the tune seamlessly, dancing and floating around the vocal track with a mix of grace notes, accents, hand/foot combinations, and double- and single-stroke fills.

"Your Wonderful Parade," *Ticket to Ride*'s second track, offers a more rudimental approach, with Karen executing a march-time feel, once again bobbing and weaving her way around the vocal. Her mix of syncopated accents, buzz rolls, and open doubles is not only tasty but precisely executed.

Perhaps Karen's best displays, however, were during the Carpenters' live show. In a YouTube video titled "The Karen Carpenter Drum Workshop," she and touring drummer Cubby O'Brien deliver a percussion extravaganza to Gershwin's "Strike Up the Band." Karen moves around the stage, playing solo snare/kick, timbales/cowbell/temple blocks, full kit (swing hi-hat over a samba bass drum ostinato), and a spread of concert toms, and she trades fours with O'Brien.

Another area in which Karen excelled had more to do with what she didn't play than what she did. "This Masquerade" (from 1973's *Now and Then*) is a wonderful example of the use of space within a tasty part—brush on the snare with the right hand, rimclick with the left. Perhaps this was a direct result of her being a singer, or maybe it was Ringo's influence. Either way, Karen had a keen ability to deliver the perfect part, and fills, for the song.

"I always felt that she knew how to integrate the drums with the vocals," says Debbi Peterson of the Bangles, who cites Carpenter as one of her main influences. "She knew just where to place her fills so they worked with the lead and harmony vocals. That was a big influence on me, as I tend to do the same. I've recently seen

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footage of her doing drum solos, and man, she nailed them! She really was quite an exquisite drummer."

Best known as the lead singer and bassist for Concrete Blonde, Johnette Napolitano contributed a cover of "Hurting Each Other" (along with Wall of Voodoo's Marc Moreland) to the 1994 alternative-rock tribute album *If I Were a Carpenter*. "The key to Karen was that she was the drummer *and* the singer," Napolitano tells *MD*. "Whereas you'd have to take a whole lot of time establishing the right balance between the drums, bass, guitar—whatever—and *then* the singing, Karen already had the voice/drum ratio organically, and everything else had to fit in between. As a drummer she was laid back, and, since she was also the singer, her accents and dynamics are perfect for the song and the singer, on every level."

Dishwalla also contributed to the tribute album ("It's Going to Take Some Time"), and we asked the group's drummer, George Pendergast, for his take on Karen's skill at the kit. "I grew up listening to the Carpenters," he says, "and I was always fascinated to see her on *Merv Griffin* or whatever special playing drums, because, at the time, it was unusual. Singing drummers at all were kind of uncommon. It was after really listening to the drum parts that I noticed that she had a way of using the hi-hat on backbeats instead of the snare—you realize she was leaving all kinds of space for vocals and the song. This is something I really appreciate in drummers. When drummers come at songs from other perspectives, it's interesting how their parts become more musical."

Sadly, this amazing talent left us too soon. On February 4, 1983, at the age of thirty-two, Karen Carpenter suffered a heart attack as a result of her battle with anorexia nervosa. And so, as we close out the year that marks the thirtieth anniversary of her death, it's important to remember Carpenter the drummer. When talking with people about her, including other musicians, too often you hear, "I didn't know Karen was a drummer!" How is this not common knowledge? Perhaps it's because we are so many years removed from the string of continuous gold and platinum records that kept the group in people's consciousness. Younger generations know little or nothing about the Carpenters' music or their history.

And maybe it's easy to dismiss the drumming on the duo's records because of their "middle of the road" musical style, which may seem dated, irrelevant, or even boring today. Regardless of the reasons, the fact remains that there is now a slew of talented, successful female drummers for whom Karen Carpenter paved the way. The notion of a female drummer is fairly commonplace today, but successive generations need to be reacquainted with music history and one of its pioneers. So break open your laptops, get on YouTube, and watch some live clips. You won't be disappointed.

Dena Tauriello is the drummer in the alt-country rock band Antigone Rising, a private instructor, adjunct professor of music at Passaic County Community College, and a regular contributor to *Modern Drummer* magazine.

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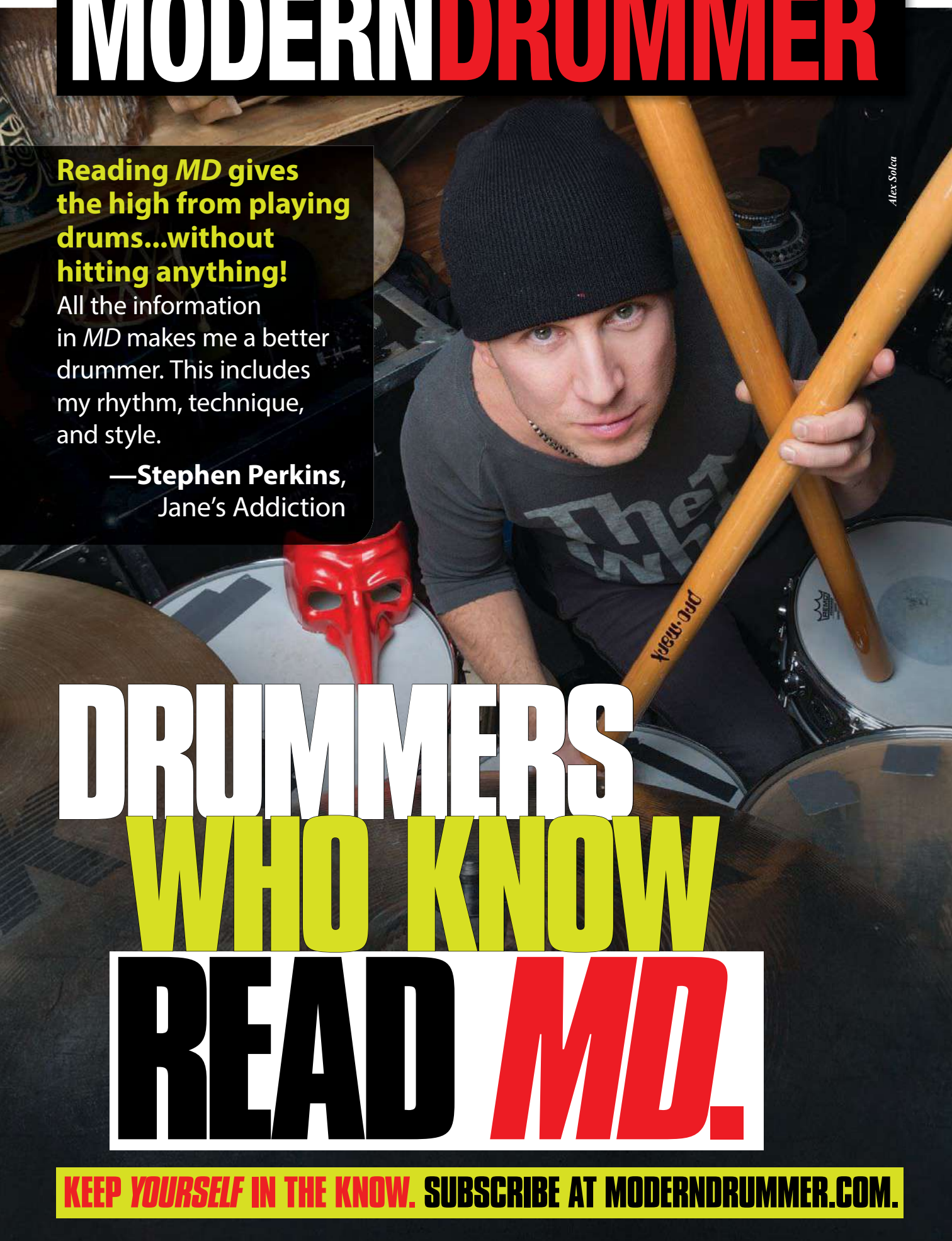

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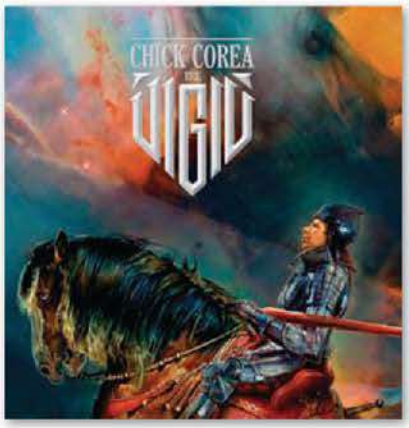

CHICK COREA *THE VIGIL*
The jazz master refuses to stand still.
Now in his seventh decade and still displaying the artistic temperament to evolve, Chick Corea returns with a new group and album full of throwback fusion arrangements, beautiful jazz subtlety, and eager, young-gun musicians ready to put their stamp on things. **Marcus Gilmore** does the unexpected, riding rims on the 6/8 of "Planet Chia" while steadily supporting the Return to Forever–ish chordal movement and Latin piano vibe. The drummer shows his maturing use of space during a reverb-drenched, snare-as-timbale solo in "Portals to Forever," and he settles into an easy, effortless waltz on the Roy Haynes tribute "Royalty." Throughout, Corea and Gilmore, along with saxophonist Tim Harland, guitarist Charles Altura, and virtuoso bassist Hadrien Feraud, are of one mind. (Concord Jazz) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

BILL FRISELL *BIG SUR*
Lush arrangements spurred by the natural beauty of California's Big Sur region are heightened by earthy yet elegant drumming.
Rudy Royston is Bill Frisell's kind of drummer. The guitarist's frequent collaborator these days, Royston, like Joey Baron and Kenny Wollesen previously, can handle anything the multifaceted Frisell can throw at him, regardless of the style or the dynamic. And there's lots going on here, from quiet acoustic tunes to country blues to surf rock to the hard-to-classify, chamber-like material Frisell increasingly favors. *Big Sur*, which also features Jenny Scheinman on violin, Eyvind Kang on viola, and Hank Roberts on cello, includes some of Frisell's most detailed arrangements in a while, with Royston playing a vital role. The drummer provides graceful support on tracks like "Song for Lana Weeks" and "Somewhere" (check out those ghost-note triplets). But when he really digs in, as on "Going to California," "Gather Good Things," and "Hawks," Royston adds power and vibrancy—and a sense of unpredictability—atop the more regimented string section. (This isn't where to turn for Frisell the master improviser.) True to Lee Townsend's production style, Royston's sound is rich and gorgeous, like the stretch of coastline that inspired this strongly melodic album. (Sony Masterworks) **Michael Parillo**

KEITH JARRETT/GARY PEACOCK/ JACK DEJOHNETTE *SOMEWHERE*
The first album in four years from the groundbreaking trio suggests that there's no end to the group's remarkable collective reimaginings.
Since its debut in 1983, this towering piano trio has alternated albums of jazz standards with free-form improvisatory releases, occasionally spurring fans into divided camps. Discs such as 2002's *Always Let Me Go* show just how adventurously far the group could stretch, with radical improvisations sometimes topping thirty minutes. Yet there's nothing more satisfying than hearing these giants revisit the Great American Songbook, as in this live outing from 2009; they're every bit as inventive in a traditional setting as in a "free" forum. Communing with bassist Gary Peacock's conversations and pianist Keith Jarrett's ever-expanding ideas, Jack DeJohnette swings and seduces yet remains a restlessly questioning catalyst. Eschewing the concept of a lead hand, DeJohnette employs his amazingly independent limbs as equally responsive voices. He's the rare drummer who can responsibly unleash torrents of notes without sacrificing rhythmic momentum or storytelling. A monumental trio with its own limitless vocabulary. (ECM) **Jeff Potter**

WILL LEE *LOVE, GRATITUDE AND OTHER DISTRACTIONS*
If he's "distracted" in any way these days, the proof won't be found here, as the bass great gets down to business with some heavy friends.
In the *Late Show* bassist's world, it's still 1985, session work is plentiful, and you can always call on friends like ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons and Toto's Steve Lukather to come out and play. *Love, Gratitude and Other Distractions* recalls a '70s/'80s sampler of pop-rock ("Miss Understanding," with **Tommy Allen**), righteous R&B ("Get Out My Life Woman," with **Shawn Pelton**), and smooth jazz ("Papounet's Ride," with a slippery **Narada Michael Walden**). The album is a drummer's showcase as well: **Chris Parker** sounds stellar on "Gratitude," **Steve Gadd** grooves on the McCartneyish "Fooled Him," and **Zach Danziger** time twists "Shahara." But the album's finest moment is drum-less: the beautiful fretless bass solo in "Simple Way to Say I Love You." (Sinning Saint Ltd.) **Ken Micallef**

KNEEBODY *THE LINE*

This group relentlessly grooves, explores, and invents.

In its sputtering rhythms and swirling melodies, Kneebody is a freely roaming polyglot touching on *Live-Evil*-era Miles Davis, Rudder (particularly the contemporary art-funk band's drummer, Keith Carlock), the British prog band Gentle Giant, various aggregates of hip-hop, and jam-band hypnosis. This weird sound is of nowhere and everywhere. Drummer **Nate Wood** seems to have grown similar legs and arms to Carlock's, from itchy snare ruffs and a time-stretching sprawl to hesitant, jarring rhythms ("Trite," "Still Play") and a booming bass drum tone ("Sleeveless"). But Wood is entirely his own drummer on the cacophonous title track and on the carnival-esque "Work Hard, Play Hard, Towel Hard," where his set slamming and speedy note spray are simply astonishing. (Concord) **Ken Micallef**

KIKOSKI/CARPENTER/NOVAK/ SHEPPARD *FROM THE HIP*

Drummer Gary Novak takes an active part in pianist Dave Kikoski's continued brilliance on record.

Dave Kikoski shines on as a superlative straight-ahead jazz pianist, with inventive ideas transported by thrilling rhythmic drive. Which isn't surprising, considering his previous long relationship as sideman to Roy Haynes. Fittingly, Kikoski employs only the best of drummers on his own dates. **Gary Novak** fills that bill with an exciting, assertive, yet never intrusive performance that sizzles on every cut. Kikoski intended to capture a spontaneous set of mostly standards before a live studio audience, and he's succeeded nobly. Reedman Bob Sheppard is passionate throughout, and the solid, swinging bassist Dave Carpenter, who sadly passed soon after this date, is the glue. Whether Novak is playing a ballad or a bopper, his deep forward motion is an irresistible force. On "Bolivia," he opens with a hybrid between soloing and swing riding. Even in these solo moments, he upholds and cherishes the groove foremost. (BFM Jazz) **Jeff Potter**

MIKE KENEALLY *YOU MUST BE THIS TALL*

Such cerebral stuff might not be aimed at kids, but the music sure knows how to have fun.

Boasting the drumming talents of **Marco Minnemann**, **Joe Travers**, and Mike Keneally himself, *You Must Be This Tall* is at once a showcase of supremely gifted musicians executing intricate composed material and a joyride through truly odd pop terrain. Travers locks into a *Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar*–style joust with Keneally's guitar on "Cornbread Crumb" and lays down some dry kit soul on "Popes." At the forefront of the up-tempo "Kidzapunk" is Minnemann's solid double bass work, while "Glop" allows room for some free playing and blazing tom fills. What Keneally lacks in drum power and touch, he makes up for by simply being able to navigate his own knotty tunes. Check out his bass drum and marching snare pattern on the bizarre "Cavanaugh" for a taste of the composer's kit work. (keneally.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

Modern Drum Set Stickings

The drummer/educator known as Swiss Chris has cut a colorful profile on the New York R&B and hip-hop scenes for years. And his drive to help drummers more deeply explore their craft is unassailable—and uniquely effective, as his recent method book makes clear.

"All cooks use water, and all drummers use stickings," Chris Flueck, aka Swiss Chris, says of his recent Cherry Lane method book, *Modern Drum Set Stickings*. "I love mixing different cultures and vibes, but to me they're all connected by stickings." As the famed Berklee professor Skip Hadden offers in his foreword, *Modern Drum Set Stickings* explores the foundation of drumming and shows how we can "unlock that foundation to make our playing both more concrete and more musical."

Swiss, as the author likes to be called, explains that there's a history of field drumming in his family dating back to the thirteenth century, and he draws from a library of French and Swiss marches in his playing and teaching methods. "I'll combine eighteenth-century European field drumming with Haitian or African drumming," says Swiss, who spent five years as John Legend's drummer and musical director. "Then I'll go into hip-hop, funk, fusion, Jimi Hendrix—whatever you want."

This open-ended approach was in fact born from a traditional source. "I grew up playing in drum lines, where it's very disciplined," Swiss says. "But you learn different cadences, different feels. The way Switzerland is, different drum lines speak with different dialects. There are so many beautiful marches that are written in 2/4 with five-, six-, and seven-stroke subdivisions—'Les 3 Dianes' and 'Le Rigodon,' for example. I grew up learning those by melody more than by reading—through oral tradition, through singing."

When Chris discovered a recording of Baby Dodds with King Oliver, his musical aspirations began to change. "Hearing Dodds phrase some of the same rudiments differently, with a swing and syncopation—it woke me up," he says. "And then later Billy Cobham opened a gateway from field drumming into the world of fusion and jazz."

The essence of *Modern Drum Set Stickings* can be found in chapter three. A "musical checklist" includes the bullet points of melody, pulse, subdivision, sticking, orchestration, dynamics, and resolution points. "By getting into the habit of thinking about all seven points each time you play the drums," Swiss explains in the text, "it will allow you to excel with total knowledge and total awareness of where you are in the song and what you are doing on your instrument."

Modern Drum Set Stickings provides working explanations of the building blocks, then offers specific guidelines, supported by tracks on the included CD, that help students focus on improving their approach to each one separately. Swiss pays particular attention to resolution points, saying, "If you can really feel a note in space and time, and feel every accent, you're never going to be surprised in a band setting when the guitar player or singer is accenting a little bit on the other side of the beat—what I call off- or on-beat thinking."

Unlike some method books, *Stickings* is not strictly progressive; depending on what aspect of their playing users focus on at a given time, they will likely find themselves returning to various sections. As laid out at the beginning of the book, the suggested way to work through the material is to combine a sticking from one of the two "matrices" (in duplet and triplet meter, respectively) with an exercise (or "sticking page application") and then move through the musical checklist, zeroing in on one element at a time. "The thirty-two stickings in duplet meter and thirty-two in triplet meter in the matrices are the more dominant combinations," Swiss says, "but my students write out their own stickings, like a hybrid of this and that. You can also play the combinations out, like the 16th-note exercises on page 24. Those combinations are not going to change. What changes is the style that you play them in, who you're playing for, and how you're going to sound consistent every night."

Swiss insists that ultimately stickings are merely a way to understand how to execute melodies. "I push myself to play the regular sticking and all possible inversions," he explains. "But I'm really just using the stickings as a vehicle. It's about [developing] your personal style. I always take a song first, look for the melody and pulse, and then build the sticking around it and embellish it."

The stickings are not meant to be set in stone. "I might only read one section, one piece," Swiss says. "I might read it horizontally, then vertically, then diagonally. On the matrices on the last two pages, for example, you can use this as a meditation of grooves or musical chops. You see when I have the 16th aligned with the triplet meters, where I'm doing groups of fours, you just hear a paradiddle. Stickings 16R and 16L on the triplets page are the gateway to open up everything to duplet meter." Chris adds that the sticking concept pertains to every limb, not just the hands, and that each stroke, notated as R = right or L = left, could be interpreted as R = RLLR and L = LRRL, etc., with any limb combination. "There are endless possibilities," he says.

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In Memoriam

Alan Myers

The drummer from the classic Devo lineup of the '70s and '80s died this past June 24 at age fifty-eight. **Josh Freese**, who's been manning the throne in the band since the mid-'90s, pays tribute to the highly creative, super-precise player known as the Human Metronome.

I don't remember any rock 'n' roll in the house when I was growing up. Not that it wasn't allowed; I just remember lots of big band jazz and classical happening. I didn't have an older sibling to hip me to any of the cool stuff. When I was seven, in 1980, I had a crummy little handheld radio, and there was a station in Orange County called "the Mighty 690," and I listened to it every day on my walk home from school. I realized they played the same stuff right around the same time every day. And when I was getting out of school at 3 P.M. I'd turn it on and hear Devo's "Whip It," which was an enormous hit and one of the most-played songs on the radio during that time. I loved it. It was fun, quirky, weird, catchy, and exciting. With my birthday coming up, I decided to ask for their LP *Freedom of Choice*. Lo and behold, I got the record and dove into it head first.

My earliest memories of "practicing" the drums were standing up with just a snare and a cymbal, wearing giant headphones, and playing along to that record. Alan

Myers was shaping me in my earliest stages of becoming the drummer I would be for the rest of my life, and I didn't even realize it. As much as I knew that I *liked* it, it took growing up and maturing for me to start realizing how truly great Alan's drumming and approach were.

A lot of people—including me for a minute—thought some (or most) of the drums on *Freedom of Choice* were drum machines and programmed stuff. But no! That's Alan in all his glory, laying it down and never straying from the patterns. I mean, Devo *did* nickname him "the Human Metronome" early on, and for obvious reasons. All the parts were deliberate, confident, and rock solid. But also unconventional and unique. And it was rock 'n' roll... but was it? I couldn't tell. I mean, it seemed so different from the only two other rock albums I owned when I was eight (*Van Halen* and Queen's *The Game*). Whatever the heck it was, it clicked with me, and I latched on to Alan's style immediately and very naturally.

I got the other two albums Devo had already put out, and I thought those were even cooler. The drumming on *Are We Not Men?* and *Duty Now for the Future* is stellar; Alan's playing really stands on its own. I hadn't heard any other drummer sound like that, and when I go back and put those records on—and yes, I do, fairly often—I still get off on his sound and style. Some of the parts he played on *Are We Not Men?* are things that when I first heard them I'd think to my eight-year-old self, *You can't do that!* Just the drums on their credo/anthem "Jocko Homo" alone were like, *Wow, I can't believe he's playing THAT!* It's abstract, brave, wacky, and cool, all at the same. And it's in 7/8!

And their legendary cover of the Stones' "Satisfaction"? That might be *the* coolest, funkiest, squared-off, linear drumbeat of all time. I bust it out all the time to soundcheck drums, and it always gets a smile from the engineer or whichever other musicians are in the room. It's a hook! It's fun to play and to listen to. Alan came up with beats and sounds that immediately grabbed the listener.

Alan is known for his machine-esque drumming, but on tracks like "Uncontrollable Urge," "Sloppy," and "Gut Feeling" he could rip and get pretty raucous. After all, a lot of people labeled Devo a punk band—partly because they didn't know what the hell else to call these weirdos. But they had a pretty punk-rock attitude and moments of urgent, fast, noisy stuff that they could always pull out of their back pockets. All the while Alan was driving it and holding it together. Grooving, and then completely controlled chaos.

Over twenty-five years ago Alan stopped working with Devo and became an electrician. I heard that he loved not being on tour, not dealing with the bad stuff that can come along with being in a rock band, and that he was great at his "new gig." In 2002 or so, he worked on the home studio of a friend of mine, and I came over to meet him and talk for a while. At the time I'd already been playing in Devo for six or seven years. I was a tiny bit hesitant about meeting him, as I was a little scared of him! Was he going to be looking at me like, "Oh, yeah...great. So you're the kid in Devo now, eh?" But I marched up to my friend's place and we hung out. He couldn't have been nicer. He put me at ease immediately, and we shared stories and talked drums, music, and Devo for an hour or two. I of course tried not to freak him out too much, but I just *had* to let him know what an impact he had on me and what an incredible drummer I thought he was. He was humble, funny, gracious, and friendly and couldn't have been cooler. That was my only encounter with him.

It's been an honor and a dream come true to follow in his footsteps as Devo's drummer for the past seventeen years. He had such a big role in my being the drummer that I am today, and I will always be indebted and grateful to him for that.

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KIT OF THE MONTH

Makes Your Heads Spin

"I always loved Rototoms as a kid," Greg Durbin of Sacramento, California, says. "I stumbled across a bunch of vintage chrome 1970s Rototoms on eBay, ranging from 6" to 18", so I purchased them on a whim."

As for the snare and bass drums, Durbin explains, "I poked around and bought three Pearl Vari-Pitch toms that were in bad shape, and I used the inner hardware to help attach my Rotos to the shells." For the unfamiliar, Vari-Pitch was a Pearl line from the late '70s that featured spin-tuning Rototom-type drums mounted on shells. With the Vari-Pitch pieces, Durbin "took out the center yoke and L brackets—the guts. But because these had come out of smaller drums, the brackets were too short. So I purchased some stainless steel L brackets—for kitchen cabinets, etc.—then drilled and threaded them, and they work and look great. I purchased the shells raw and drilled and finished them myself.

"The two bass drums are 18" Rotos. I attached them to the rack from the top of the drums, so they hang in the air—no feet to the ground. And I put bass drum hoops on the Roto heads so I could connect the foot pedals directly to them." You'll even notice a hi-hat made of 12" and 10" Rototom spokes on the right side of the kit, plus an 8" Roto-spokes tambourine above the main hi-hat.

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to kitofthemonth@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit of the Month" in the subject line.

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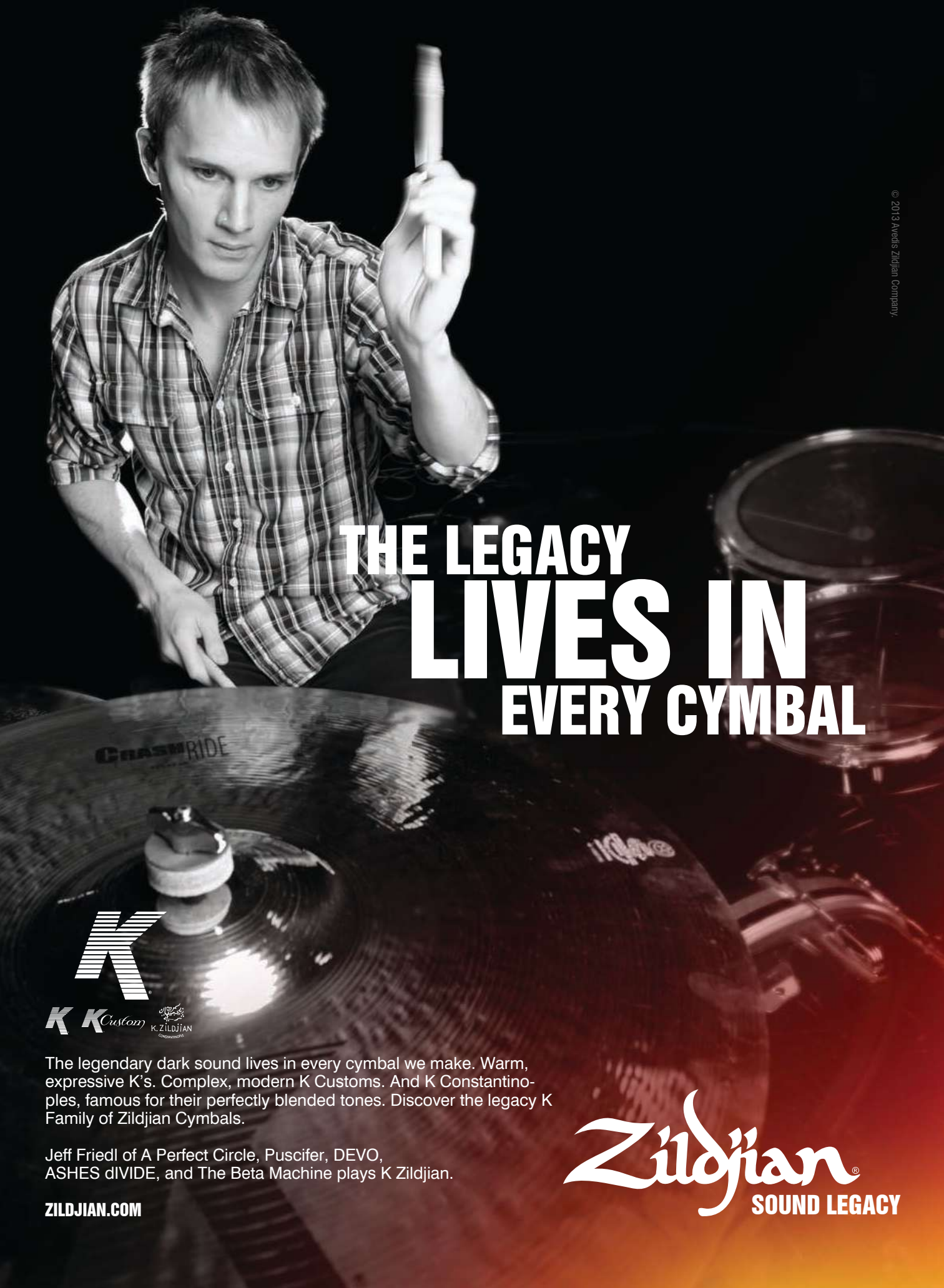
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